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TO CHRIST THROUGH CRITICISM

TO THE

VERY REV. J. H. BERNARD, D.D.

DEAN OF ST PATRICK'S

ARCHBISHOP KING'S LECTURER ON DIVINITY

FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN

PIGNUS OBSERVANTIÆ

TO CHRIST THROUGH CRITICISM

BY

RICHARD W. SEAVER, M.A., B.D.

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Containing the substance of the Donnellan Lectures delivered before the University of Dublin, 1905-6

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PREFACE

It has been my endeavour throughout these pages to indicate rather the trend than the result of modern religious thinking. There is an increasing number of Christian people whom the traditional presentation of Christianity—Anglican or Genevan—has ceased to influence. The imminent danger is that they, identifying Theology with Religion, Scholasticism with the Faith of Christ, may tacitly consider themselves outside the Christian Fellowship.

This class I mainly had in mind as I wrote, with whose mental attitude I largely sympathise, the loss of whose virile qualities to the Church must prove an incalculable disaster. Such—reversing the orthodox procedure, but "according to Christ Jesus"—I would urge to take Him, in the first instance, as Spiritual Teacher, Guide, Master, till perchance, from their experience of "following Jesus in the way," He may at length approve Himself as indeed the Saviour Christ.

I have no fear lest he, who can now in heart and conscience call himself a disciple of Jesus,

may find some other test confronting him in God's Judgment Day.

There are passages here, I am aware, which to some may appear inconclusive, unsatisfactory, incapable of being labelled in any systematic category. God's many-sided truth, as it seems to me, refuses at times to be exactly comprehended in our formal schemes of theology. The honest leaving of a question unsolved is better and more reverent than a vain assumption of infallibility, in the endeavour to be consistent with the requirements of a cast-iron theory.

The date on which I pen these prefatory lines reminds me, were I at all likely to forget, of the indebtedness which I most gratefully acknowledge to that Catholic Brotherhood whose writings have so often proved themselves mental stimulus and spiritual enlightenment.

RICHARD W. SEAVER.

All Saints' Day, 1906.

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I

THE NEW THEOLOGY

" When Roland, being made a minister, presented himself before Louis XVI. in a simple dress-coat and shoes without buckles, the master of the ceremonies raised his hands to heaven, thinking that all was lost. In fact, all was changed."

TAINE.

THE title given to these pages indicates a conviction as to the general issue of modern Biblical Criticism, more especially of the New Testament. The result manifests itself rather in a changed attitude than a decisive pronouncement. We have learned to distinguish between spiritual value, and words and ideas which are its vehicle. No longer do we confound the sacredness of the vessel with that of its contents. Probably never again shall we read the books of the Bible exactly as our forefathers read them. Theories and interpretations, now seen to be temporary and partial, have yielded to the solvent of a reverent yet scientific criticism, of which the motto is, "Not to destroy but to fulfil." The study of Comparative Religion has shown us affinities no less than distinctions between Christianity and the other world-faiths, and has helped towards a coherent and reasonable account of its origin and development.

From behind the mists of metaphysics and the subtleties of dogma, the great Central Figure has emerged. To-day it may be sincerely affirmed that we know Jesus of Nazareth as none have

known Him since the passing of the first Christian century. At times indeed there has come a loss of the sense of proportion to students engrossed amid details of New Testament history, busied with minute investigations as to date and genuineness and authorship. The archæologist concerned with the foundations, absorbed with curious minutiæ of material and method, is often blind to the subtle beauty of the perfect structure, to the inspiration of the old-world builders wrought out through the whole, uttering itself in mullioned window and fretted roof and soaring pinnacle. Questions of literary analysis and historical dependence seem to admit such a variety of answers as to preclude all certainty of the reality of Jesus. Just here it is reassuring to remember that, from the very nature of the case, this temptation to despair besets all who seek to revivify the great figures of the past. We are dependent upon human testimony, and here there is no infallibility. In the domain of history we must content ourselves with relative and not absolute truth. Since, despite this, we do not feel compelled to close our Thucydides or Cæsar, but are satisfied as to the general validity of their narratives, so neither shall we put away our New Testament in the endeavour to return to Christ.

Criticism, as Bishop Gore remarks, loves to

dwell on differences; but the real unity is unmistakable. The modern student, in his desire to dive below the surface, or in his passion for original work, may bury himself prematurely in some forgotten corner of Church History, some study of Apocryphal Acts, or anonymous and unpublished documents. Let him first tread the broad highway. Let him read the main texts, as they can be read in mass and with rapidity, first of all, that the great general impression may be made upon him.

When one withdraws a space from these minutiæ of critical investigation and is enabled to comprehend all that has been accomplished by the labours of devout scholars in these countries, on the Continent, and in America, the result is definite and invigorating. The outlines of Jesus given to us in the Gospels take on a greater distinctness, as we are brought more and more under the spell of His simplicity, His greatness, His originality. The Christ of metaphysics yields to the Christ of history. No longer are we content to assert the Incarnation as a doctrine; we wish to realise it as a fact. We enter the world of thought and of action in which He and His contemporaries lived, and reconstruct the conditions of that far-off time, social, political, ecclesiastical.

More important even than the actual critical results achieved by the application to the Bible of the methods of historical science is the contemporary philosophical movement which influences all study of religion. Those who devote their energies to the pathetic yet impossible task of proving the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures—as though to maintain this were to hold the impregnable key of the Christian position—fail to mark that the issue is no longer here. Elsewhere has shifted the centre of the conflict. Within rather than without henceforth must be sought the true and satisfying Christian "Apologia."

Together with the fresh accentuation of the fact that history affords relative, not absolute, certainty, has come the reassuring conviction that the proof of the absoluteness of Christianity is not to be looked for in supernatural credentials of the past, save as coupled with and issuing forth in supernatural results in the present. The present alone is verifiable, the past is not. Indeed, in the light of the Incarnation, as we are being enabled more freely to enter into its meaning, the old rigorous distinction between natural and supernatural tends to disappear. It was foreign to the thought of Jesus, for whom the fall of a sparrow and the redemption of a

soul took place in the one universe of the one God. The sphere of the supernatural includes the whole life of the Spirit in man, in so far as it is higher than the life of nature. Christianity, as a revelation or in history, belongs wholly to the region of the supernatural, as do also all God's relations with the human conscience. But the supernatural as well as the natural falls within the realm of eternal, immutable law. While therefore Christianity and the result it produces are supernatural in the truest sense, as belonging to a higher sphere than the natural life of man, yet from another point of view the supernatural is also most truly natural, for " it represents the eternal nature of things in the kingdom of the Spirit—it follows a law which is the expression of the inmost mind of God." [1] So long as man believed that God had set the machinery of this universe—organic and inorganic—in motion, and withdrawing, left it to itself, then if miracles never happened, this verily was a God-forsaken world. Thus it was that a false philosophic theory compelled orthodox defenders of Christianity to attach to the question of miracles an altogether misplaced importance. With them, belief in miracle had come to be almost essential to belief in God.

[1] Allen, p. 391.

We to whom He has revealed the uniformity of His working alike in nature's heights as in her depths, are aware of difficulties unfelt by earlier generations, as we are brought face to face in the Scriptures with alleged and apparent breaches of His law. Ere we dare accept miracle in our scheme of things, we must find other reasons to convince us, as indeed we do, of a different order, and infinitely more persuasive than those which hitherto have seemed sufficient. Taught by the Incarnation itself, whilst behind all of necessity we postulate the Absolute, the Transcendental, it is in the normal and not in the abnormal we seek that which is for us the knowable, the manifested God. It is not " the fire and the earthquake " of omnipotence, but " the still small voice " of goodness, which appeals to and wins the allegiance of that within us which is akin to God Himself. To man, made in the image of God, the natural is the good, the unnatural the evil.

To Hegel, Christianity is the outcome and consummation of the entire process through which, from the beginning, the whole creation with groanings unutterable has been blindly labouring. The Incarnation is the ultimate truth which underlies all life; the supreme insight, to give expression to which all the

earlier religions were striving. His method is deductive. Christianity is simply the expression in time of a truth already clearly apprehended by philosophy apart from all history, wherein indeed it finds its verification. The undoubted truth here, that Christianity is the realisation through the slow processes of time of a universal ideal, needs to be supplemented by its complementary, that in the Christian faith is something unique and transcendent; not merely a more fruitful growth from the common human soil. Any exaggeration of one to the exclusion of the other is untrue to the totality of religious history. What is wanted is a conception, at once supernatural and natural, which shall exhibit the distinctive features of Christianity in their universal relations and significance. Our faith, it is widely felt to-day, if it is to prove its right to universal authority, must take up into itself the elements of truth in all the historic faiths, while at the same time it supplies something peculiar to itself which they lack. This element is the Christ. Christian theology is based fundamentally, " not so much upon a gradual edifice of religious ideas, a process of tentative conjectures more or less satisfactorily verified in experience, but rather upon the actual

manifestation of a historic life accepted as Divine." [1] With Christ's supremacy in the religious life of humanity, the claim of Christianity to be the final religion stands or falls.

To the philosophy of Ritschl is largely due the attempt to purge theology from metaphysical and scholastic conceptions foreign to its essence. The questions so long and so profoundly discussed, as to the nature of the divine consciousness, are not for us of primary importance. Our main necessity, to know God's will, must be met in the region of ethics, not in that of metaphysics. What concerns us chiefly has to do with the religious and not the intellectual order—the meaning of the world to-day as it affects our religious life, the significance of the sufferings and sins with which it afflicts us, and how we may find deliverance.

Metaphysically we speak of God as the Absolute, the Ultimate Reality, but this is an abstraction on which the religious nature tries to feed in vain. Ethically the Christian sees God in Jesus Christ, and his conception is warm, definite, personal. "God as Saviour is a reality for which more experimental evidence can be brought than for the Absolute of philosophy." [2]

[1] Moberly, p. 32. [2] Brown, p. 257.

Religion and metaphysics, it is true, cannot be entirely divorced, for the human mind will question and ceaselessly endeavour to give intellectual expression, as in theology, to its conceptions of the divine. "The individual, consciously or unconsciously, will formulate the Christian experience, and left to himself will formulate it inadequately. Released from the dogma of the Church, he will make a dogma of his own, which will react upon and limit the experience" (Green, vol. iii. p. 182). Even with this dominant philosophic school, the moment its members attempt to explain Christ to their own minds, they are either driven back upon transcendentalism, or the whole question is kept, as by Harnack, in convenient vagueness. The simple fact is, that we cannot, as with Ritschl, rest content with merely formulating the "value" of Christ to us; we are forced to go in and ask what He is in Himself. The mind cannot satisfy itself with such indefiniteness as appears in Harnack's application of the term "unique" to Jesus. The question still presses—Can we stop here? Will His own utterances and claims—if the Gospels are of any historic worth—permit us to stop here? Ritschl indeed speaks of Christ's Godhead, but warns against the putting on this epithet

any " metaphysical " interpretation. But dare we apply this word in a metaphorical sense to one who is not essentially God ? Ought such a being to have the religious " value " of God ? The whole doctrine of a real incarnation is here involved. The God of nature is impersonal, and the voice of God within cannot always be distinguished from our own thoughts. The " Human Voice through the thunder " has never sounded except from the lips of Jesus Christ. Why must the thinking mind postulate God for the explanation of the world, and be debarred from postulating something transcendental in explanation of the Person of Jesus Christ ?

Most fully do we grant that the Christ of past history and of present experience is of vastly greater religious value to us than the Christ of metaphysics, yet we go on to re-echo Hermann's words, himself a disciple of Ritschl, that, if we seek to follow out this union of the divine and human nature in Christ, " the Christological decrees of the old Church still mark out the limits within which such attempts must move."

As to-day the metaphysical Christ gives place in religious value to the Christ of history, so the Christ of history lives on and verifies Himself as Saviour, and has His perfect worth confirmed in

the Christ of experience. No age can pass upon Him a final verdict. It but makes its greater or less contribution to the understanding of His mission. One of the greatest problems is to disentangle the everlasting truth in His message from its accidental embodiment in the oriental forms of thought of an age long past. Not even spiritual insight of itself avails for complete interpretation, most authoritative guide though it be for direction of the individual life. "Each age has its own vision of the Incarnate Son, and hears His word in its own language." As of old, the eternal message is both manifold and one—one in its origin and content, manifold in that the Eternal speaks to us through the ever-changing forms of the "Time-spirit." Christianity has been aptly described as "the progressive realisation of the supremacy of Christ." In its possession of Him with His supreme revelation of God's love and power, it most securely bases its claim to be the absolute religion. So it must show itself supreme in life, giving to the problems of existence their most satisfactory answer; appealing to the conscience, kindling enthusiasm, laying hold upon the will. Not upon its monotheistic teaching, nor its doctrine of redemption, nor its high ethical standard, does this supreme claim rest. These

divine qualities Christianity shares with the great faiths of the world; whereas in Jesus Christ, in His life, character, authority, Gospel, we find the distinctive mark—the essence—of that religion which bears His Name.

It was a luminous saying of Maurice, that toleration is founded not upon the uncertainty but upon the certainty of truth. The conviction that God reveals Himself more fully to the Christian than to the Buddhist is strengthened, not weakened, by the accompanying belief that the Christian is not the miraculous exception in a godless world of darkness. I am assuredly helped to my certainty of the perfect revelation in Christ when I find that not to me alone, not solely in Old Testament or in New Testament, has the Divine Voice spoken. Else, were my position solitary and unique, my perplexity would be increased a hundredfold. That religion is a true and universal experience of the race I welcome as additional confirmation of the fact that in Christ is fulfilment of all that has gone before.

To-day we are true to the essential spirit of Christianity, as we seek a more ethical, a more personal expression of it than is to be found in the abstract terms of the older theology. We shall think of the Bible as the record of God's

progressive revelation of Himself, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, explicated by apostolic but not infallible men, finding yet further explication in the history of the Christian Church. As sin shall be no longer for us a vague theological abstraction divorced from daily life, but conscious lack of conformity to the Spirit of Christ, so the great word Salvation, degraded by the terms of penal law, shall again grow luminous and real—the establishment of right relations with God our Father, and the creation of Christ-like character. However through historic and ecclesiastical reasons we may feel compelled to provisionally define Christ's Church for purposes of religious discipline and edification, we shall shun the folly of imagining our limitations to be final, in whose ears His own judgment keeps ever sounding, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."

Christ's Gospel has always had to clothe itself in such forms as were given by the thought of the time. Changing with the changing centuries, it is not to be absolutely identified with any of its passing forms. Where men have been touched by the Spirit of Jesus and live for the ends for which He gave Himself, there it is to be found. It is itself His Spirit become incarnate in human lives.

Vitality is the test of truth, not in Newman's sense of the phrase—not as though mere persistence and survival were enough, but in the sense that " a belief which universally and persistently fosters growth in the Spirit of Christ, is not only pragmatically true, but is proved to be, in some symbolic way, representative of that world of ultra-reality in accommodation to which our spiritual life consists." [1] By such touchstone the highest religious thought to-day is testing inherited doctrines, is striving to concentrate itself upon what is essential in contradistinction to all that is temporary and adventitious in current Christianity. If there is a vital truth underlying a dogmatic formulary or mode of expression, it needs to be recast in a form that will emphasise, instead of obscuring its vital life-forming power. If, on the other hand, the dogmatic formulary expresses a conception which the growing experience of mankind shows to be false, it needs to be contradicted and refuted by a clear expression of the contemporary Christian conscience. Acts are the results of thoughts, and men will not act consistently and thoroughly unless they are inspired by deep conviction. Religious thought has in great measure become crystallised in the form of

[1] Tyrrell, p. 1.

dogmas, and in this way many of the main motives for earnest action have been rendered useless, because they have been taken out of the sphere of consideration of the great mass of the people. Let us take two concrete illustrations, from the modern attitude towards the public worship of God, and the support of hospitals. In the past, the necessity of the former was founded chiefly upon the appeal to authority ; of the latter, chiefly upon philanthropic motives and sentiments. At present we witness an unparalleled activity in the alleviation of undeserved suffering in the same Christian society wherein the attendance at public worship is rapidly diminishing. In the former case we have the recognition by the conscience that this hospital work is an essential part of our duty ; that it rests on eternal laws of universal obligation ; that it is also in reality the bringing to good effect of the words and teaching of Jesus Christ. Can it be pretended that this, or anything of this nature, is the popular view of the worship of God ? Here to a fatal extent in Christian teaching religion has been divorced from life, and its sanctions found solely in a supra-mundane sphere, far withdrawn, as to its appeal, from the " daily round and common task."

One of the besetting sins of religious thinkers

is to be content with nominalisms in theology. Often it is easier to rest satisfied with some scientific definition of the truth than it is for us to seek humbly and patiently for the real, and perhaps larger fact of revelation. The history of Christ's Church in this world, as Newman Smyth points out, has been one repeated process of partial understandings of Christ, with misunderstandings, and then new and larger understandings of His words. So it was with the first disciples; and as with them so with ourselves; the trials and the tasks of faith have been ever God's providential method for guiding us into fuller truth. A true but partial lesson learned of Jesus Christ; the Church's contentment with that lesson and teaching the people to repeat it by rote; a discovery of some new meaning or fresh interpretation of the old truths, and then a Renaissance, a Reformation, another of the Days of the Son of man. At first the new flood seems a destructive torrent, but at length the purified stream, the more fruitful fields, have proved that it was indeed a fresh inflowing of power from on high.

As we look abroad over Christendom to-day, each great division, whatever its ecclesiastical name, manifests the same great struggle between the radical and the conservative; the tradition-

alist and him of present prophetic insight. " Historic Protestantism has its Catholics, and the Church Catholic its Protestants." Each element is necessary to the stability of human progress. It is untrue to assert that history repeats itself. It does indeed repeat itself, with a difference. There is always something added, and that added something is the new-born contribution of each succeeding generation till " God shall make the pile complete."

II

RESULTS OF CRITICISM

"I have a life in Christ to live,
But ere I live it must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
Of this and that book's date?
Nay, rather, while the sea of doubt
Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life and death and sin,
Let me but creep within
Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet
Take but the lowest seat."

SHAIRP.

To beings such as we are, all revelation comes through human media of thought and speech, whose very imperfectness of necessity mars the divine vision, dulls the divine voice. Moreover, we are but too sadly aware that a great idea, a fine commemorative custom, a clear ethical doctrine, may be degraded into empty formula, superstitious ceremony, dry, profitless notion. As Mr Edward Caird points out, the teaching of history conveys this clear lesson, that while the tendency of the idea is to create for itself an organism, in social life, in politics, in religion, through which it may become effective, this very organism, in the course of time, itself tends to vitiate and destroy the idea of which it was the product.

We cannot reasonably deny, says Bishop Gore, that permanent religion at every period is associated with impermanent elements, the gold with the dross; and we must have the intellectual courage to seek to dissociate the two, and to draw distinctions between essential and unessential, and to make concessions and to seek readjustments. It is ours through the experience of life

—the varying material which Providence affords us—to explicate and develop all that already exists by implication in the revelation of Jesus Christ, who has yet "many things to say unto us." The principles by which He lived are of eternal worth; the method of His action varies according to the necessity of its environment.

It is no new task this to which we are called. By the men of the fourth and of the sixteenth centuries, the faith had to be restated amid the enlarging thought of the Christian world.

> "Our little systems have their day,
> They have their day and cease to be;
> They are but broken lights of Thee,
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

This is the Return to Christ. He is the norm by which we shall regulate the contents of our faith. With His person are directly connected those elements of original Christianity which have held their ground through all the changing centuries. To them He has imparted something of His own immortality. In them rather than in the doctrines of Apostles, however inspired, the decrees of Councils, however orthodox, we most clearly discern His purpose, testing each successive theology by the mind of Christ. "I could wish," wrote Erasmus, "that those frigid

subtleties either were completely cut off, or were not the only things that the theologians held as certain, and that the Christ pure and simple might be implanted deep within the minds of men." It is indeed most true, that Christianity now means to us much besides the *ipsissima verba* of Christ Himself or of His immediate Apostles. It has taken up into itself, under the guidance of His spirit, much that is good and true from other sources, but " All that is most essential in it has grown out of what was said and done by the historic Christ." [1]

While Harnack finds the essence of Christianity solely in faith in God the Father as revealed in Jesus Christ, there is much in the criticism of Loisy that a religion which has filled such a place in history and renewed so to speak the conscience of humanity, cannot take its origin and derive its sole value from one single thought. Yet Loisy himself, though he maintains that the nature of the rose is better seen in the fully developed flower than in the unfolded bud, still finds the permanent in the Christian faith amid all that is temporal and relative, by applying to it the touchstone of the mind of Christ. " That which has been essential in the Gospel of Jesus, is all that holds the first and most

[1] Rashdall, p. 243.

considerable place in His authentic teaching and the ideas for which He strove and for which He died." [1]

The science of Historical Criticism compels us to revise many judgments long current in matters secular as well as religious. It would be indeed strange if this were not so. " Before the beginning of the nineteenth century," writes Prof. Bury in his Inaugural Address at Cambridge, " the study of history was not scientific." Our knowledge of the past was seldom the ordered knowledge of evidence and observation. Too frequently it was based upon the insecure foundation of authority and tradition. The new feeling after Christ which is astir to-day in all the Churches, reformed and unreformed alike, born through dissatisfaction with institutional and dogmatic religion, has been shaped by the historical spirit. The distinction between the old theology and the new, as Fairbairn points out, is that the former was primarily doctrinal and secondarily historical, while the latter is primarily historical and secondarily doctrinal. An Augustine largely shapes the theology of the western world. The study of history enables us to recreate that most striking figure of the fifth century, to know something

[1] Loisy, p. 8.

of the environment in which he lived and thought, and the forces of which he was largely the resultant. As we study him in proper perspective, against the background which history has provided, we come to understand the origin and the meaning of the Imperial Roman type so dominant in Protestantism no less than Romanism. Doubtless in the Providence of God, not otherwise than in the cast-iron framework of institution and of dogma, could the Church have survived the stormy passage of the re-making of Europe after the fall of the Western Empire. May not, however, that which once was a necessity now linger on as an anachronism, from the fancied shelter of which God is driving us forth for fuller purposes of growth and education? A change fraught with momentous consequences took place, when the methods pursued in the physical sciences were brought to bear upon those which deal with human affairs, even with religion where the interest for us is paramount. By many devout Christians this region is, with good reason, regarded as holy ground, and their Bible as sacrosanct. Here, at least, the writers are possessed of an exempt jurisdiction! Here the writ of science does not run! Such views, so frequently the fruit of a genuine reverence, can no longer be maintained. Our faith cannot be

preserved by any protective policy of ignorance. The Word of God is able to stand in its own commanding truth, nor does it need to be propped up by theories of human invention. "As for this newer study of the Bible," to quote the Bishop of Hereford, "it deserves to be heartily welcomed both for its truth-seeking aim, and because it brings new interest and reality into the religion of the more educated classes. Our only hope of keeping Christianity really influential in the life of a scientifically educated people lies this way." The argument, "Criticism has disproved the traditional view of the Scriptures, therefore they have ceased to be an authority in religion," is met by the conservative theologian with his most lame and impotent rejoinder: "The traditional view must then be retained, or indeed the authority will go." Thus he seeks to preserve tradition at the expense of faith. Verily there is a better way. The Scriptures either are, or are not fit subjects for scholarship, for historical criticism. If they are not, then all sacred scholarship is a mistake, and they are a body of literature possessed of the inglorious distinction of being incapable of being understood. If they are, then the more scientific the scholarship, the greater its use in the sacred field of Scripture. What it does and decides

may be wrong, but the wrong must be proved by other and better scholarship. The authority of Scripture in religion, it needs to be asserted, does not depend on questions that critical scholarship alone can decide. "Authority belongs to the Bible, not as a book but as a revelation; and it is a revelation, not because it has been canonised, but because it contains the history of the Redeemer and our redemption." [1]

Most surely do we follow Christ, when, in our search for truth, we resolutely decline to allow theories however venerable to stand in the way of ascertained fact. Called upon by what we believe to be a clear voice of God, we abandon, not indeed light-heartedly, the old anchorage, committing the preservation of our faith to Him who is ever faithful, for

> "The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
> And God fulfils Himself in many ways."

Half a century ago, men received and taught the Bible as it stands in the Authorised Version. Doctrines were proved, duties enforced, ritual or the want of it justified by sentences and words deemed irrefutable, because in the Bible. In our schools the Bible stories were taught, Bible characters eulogised, without much discrimination, in unquestioning faith.

[1] Fairbairn, p. 508.

Criticism was practically unknown. The Bible was treated as one solid consistent whole, and its words as final and infallible authority. If all this be no longer possible, does there not go with this confession a sense of loss? The teacher's work is now vastly more complicated. Immeasurably greater is the demand upon him and those to whom he speaks. How much easier to say, "The Church has spoken," "These are the words of the Bible," and to have the matter thus finally settled! Instinctively we crave for an infallible, unerring guide, and if such fail us, we feel that we are indeed undone. Yet, as the late Provost Salmon pointed out, in his discussion of Papal Infallibility, escape from all possibility of error and from the responsibility of determining our own future is impossible, whether we choose the Church as our infallible guide, or Scripture or Christ Himself. It must originally be *our* own choice that is exercised, our own judgment that determines. We cannot get behind ourselves and find some other spring of action than our own determination. Just as the world of the Renaissance, in its deeper spirits, mourned the loss of the old idea of an infallible Catholic Church, bulwark through the dark ages of a Christendom sorely beset, so this century is destined to feel the loss of the venerable

idea of an infallible book, hallowed by the reverence paid to every syllable, enshrined in the light of benediction which it has been to our forefathers through so many generations.

Nevertheless, if loss there be, is there no compensating gain? What is for us, through the teachings of Providence, the true attitude towards the Bible? Shall we not believe that the Bible contains the record of the progressive revelation of God in the spirit of man? It is an advance which, in the Old Testament especially, is not always regular, but marked by periods of retrogression as well as progress; a feature stamped clear upon the whole human story. Believing it to be progressive, we are set free from all doubtful evasion and crooked interpretation in morals, general knowledge, scientific description. We shall read its widely varying literature naturally and so most profitably. Nor shall we burden ourselves with any *a priori* theory of inspiration, but testing this sacred volume by human experience, we shall find no words too strong to express the difference in degree between the spiritual, enlightening, searching power of the Bible and that of all other religious books. Its influence confessedly stands unique as an inspiration to holiness and righteousness; unique in its quality of invoking in human

hearts the consciousness of the Divine, the call to the higher life of the Spirit. Religion must suffer, the Bible itself must suffer if we obstinately insist upon the maintenance of views which earlier generations held alike with reverence and honesty. They were true to their intellectual environment, so different from ours, but the divine provision for them.

Unfortunately the manifest spiritual uniqueness of the Bible has been confused with a theory which seeks to make it infallible in matters of scientific statement and history. To this disastrous claim neither Church nor Bible gives sanction. The doctrine of verbal infallibility served as the hard crust to protect the tender life of the seed. Now that the seed has grown to a fuller strength, it no longer needs such protection and its continuance can only prove injurious. Our difficulty and our duty is to assist this partial and imperfect view of Inspiration to unfold and complete itself in fuller truth.

As Prof. Marcus Dods points out, the publication of the sacred books of other religions has had its effect, for in them we find stronger claims to inspiration and infallibility than we find in our own Scriptures. " How, it may be fairly asked, can such claims be disproved by arguments which are not equally applicable if

urged by a Hindu against similar pretensions which may be raised on behalf of the Bible?"[1] It is only by examining the Bible itself that we can find out how far it is trustworthy. To attempt to bar out criticism by affirming inspiration is a futile enterprise.

Biblical Criticism is twofold—textual and historical (including literary) or, as it is styled, Higher Criticism. The aim of the textual critic is to ascertain, so far as possible, the original writing. He sets himself to answer the question:—What was the oldest and most genuine MSS. free from later omissions or additions? Thus he brings us face to face with a fact, *e.g.* here so far as we can attain is the true text of Thucydides or of St Mark. But at once arises the further question:—Assuming that this is what our author did actually write, are we justified also in regarding it as a transcript from reality? Were these words actually spoken, these deeds actually performed? At this point historical criticism takes up its task, and from consideration of the writer's character, means of knowledge, mental and literary atmosphere, works towards the most probable conclusion.

Thus, as Prof. Gardner points out, in place of simple external fact of history, ultimately we are

[1] Prof. Dods, p. 172.

brought face to face with psychological fact, with what was believed to have taken place, or even what the author wishes us to believe took place. It is this psychological element in secular and religious history which is rapidly growing in importance, causing us very largely to modify traditionally accepted views. For loss or gain, it is now at work upon the Old and New Testaments. It is science, ordered knowledge. While indeed we should be slow to accept merely tentative conclusions, it is obscurantism not orthodoxy which fatuously invokes popular prejudice or ecclesiastical censure against its method. The purpose of the Scriptures as a whole is the edification of men in faith and righteousness, and this undoubtedly has been and may be realised amid much uncertainty as to particular books. Who can measure the amount of harm inflicted upon sensitive souls by the alternative which has been offered them! All or nothing; the whole Bible as it stands as an infallible revelation from God, or no revelation at all?

A true interpretation of the Old or New Testament must be based upon the recognition that Oriental habits of thought and of expression, natural to the writers, were not obliterated by their becoming channels of divine teaching. It is necessary therefore that these characteristics

in an Isaiah or St Paul, be carefully studied by us, to whom they are so alien, before we can fully grasp their spiritual content. Further, the scientific lines of demarcation between fact and allegory or poetry were not in literature defined for these writers, as they are for us; and, as we need to bear in mind, even the closest union of the soul with God is no protection from errors of fact.

Another result of the application of scientific historical knowledge will be that we shall now regard as narratives of process, what we formerly read as narratives of transaction. We have learned *e.g.* that this earth is not the centre of the universe, and that the six days' drama of Genesis is poetry not science, the representation of a process of evolution not of an instantaneous transaction. With Prof. Hort we accept the story of the early chapters of that book as a divinely appointed parable. Whether or not the corrupt state of human nature was preceded in temporal sequence by an incorrupt state, this is the most vivid, the most natural way of exhibiting the truth, that in God's primary purpose man was incorrupt, so that the evil in him should be regarded as having a temporary or adventitious character.

It is even of greater importance to remember in

our study of the Old Testament that primitive conceptions of morality and of God there portrayed, are defective, incomplete. "We can no longer say," wrote the late brilliant scholar Aubrey Moore, "It is in the Bible, approved or allowed by God; therefore it is right. We are studying imperfect records of a progressive revelation, and we can never spare ourselves the effort of a moral judgment."

In estimating the religious value of the Old Testament, the teaching of Christ must be our guide. Hitherto, as Professor Bruce remarks, the Church has been much more alive to Christ's presence in the Old Testament than to His absence. It has so read Him into its pages, that the "caterpillar becomes a butterfly" before the time, and all sense of development, progress, growth, in revelation is destroyed. Prophecy, which, historically interpreted, is as a beautiful moonlight in the dark, becomes like the moon in the daytime, pale, dim, useless, in the hands of interpreters who are too anxious to read a Christian meaning into all its oracles. No defect of moral sentiment or religious temper is allowed to appear, no pagan survival, as in Abram's sacrifice of his son. All is apologised for, justified, transfigured, under the impression that so best is reverence shown towards the Word

of God. Not after this fashion, but "according to Christ Jesus" shall we read the Old Testament, recognising it to be our right and our duty to carry the ideas of God and man and their mutual relations, as taught by Him, back to these Scriptures, and to regard in them all not in conformity therewith, as pertaining to that defective element naturally belonging to the earlier stages of a progressive revelation. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

We value the Old Testament because it contains the record of the origin and growth of the first great monotheistic religion; though we know now better than before, how slowly and gradually this supreme truth was reached. Still more highly do we estimate its worth, because it stands in closer and more intimate relation than any other section of religious history, with the career of Him in whom the self-revelation of God has reached its central point. We especially associate this idea of revelation with exceptional men, the men of spiritual insight, religious genius, those who have taken the great forward steps in religious development, the heroes, the leaders of the race. Yet we do not forget that such men have not all been of the Jewish stock. The Light which

lighteth every man shone, though with less illuminative radiance, outside the range of the writers of their sacred literature. The Catechism of the modern Greek Church contains a truth liable to be overlooked by Western Christendom: "Jesus Christ came into the world after many ages of preparation. The Jews were prepared by God for His coming through the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets, but the Gentiles were prepared through men of great reasoning power and wisdom, Socrates, Plato and others, who perceived the wrongness of worshipping many gods, and whose minds were lifted up to the idea of one God."

As compared with the Old Testament we hold of quite paramount authority the New Testament, because it contains the record of the life and character and teaching of Jesus Christ in whom the enlightened conscience of humanity recognises the highest and the fullest revelation of God's nature that man is capable of receiving.

Yet here also we are conscious of varying degrees of inspiration. It is not all for us of equal worth. The words of Christ stand first and are more authoritative for us than comments or epistles of disciple or apostle. It is the practically unanimous verdict of criticism that we have in the Gospels a substantially trustworthy

account of the life of Jesus. Dr Martineau, a Unitarian, writes—"No one can affect ignorance of what He was: enough is saved to plant His personality in a clear space distinct from all that history or even fiction presents." This is the witness of an expert who is certainly swayed by no bias of orthodoxy. Yet holding this view as absolute truth it is perfectly consistent to admit the possibility that this or that incident may be unhistorical or exaggerated; that this version is more accurate than that; that the pages of St Mark are more trustworthy for the doings, and those of St Matthew for the sayings, of the Saviour of mankind. "If we are faithful to the principle that the unique authority of the Gospels is due only to what they tell us of Christ, we shall be thankful for any criticism which helps us to get closer to the very words of the Master than those do, who treat the gospels—all of them equally and equally in every part—as *verbatim* reports of His utterances."

The objection urged that such criticism is subjective, is merely the statement of a truism which is applicable to all literary and historic judgments. From the critic of the New Testament is demanded possession of the highest

[1] Rashdall, p. 265.

qualities; a spiritual insight corresponding to the intuitive perception, the almost additional sense, with which the true critic in art or literature becomes endowed. "It should be possible for one fully possessed by the spirit of Christ to divine, by a sort of tact or instinct, how He spoke and acted, or would have spoken and acted, under given circumstances. And such a portrayal might be a far truer revelation of His mind and personality than the shreds and scraps of biographical evidence that have come down to us." [1]

We may take it as a well-established result, that the books of the New Testament, as historical documents, are authoritative records of Christian faith and thought, as they existed at a very early date. History and criticism make it certain that there was an historical foundation for that faith and those opinions in the historic personality of Jesus. It is also beyond the range of doubt that those who came under His personal influence were unable to think of Him as an ordinary man. Historical students therefore, as the first Christians, are compelled by criticism itself to speak of Jesus as unique. Prof. Gardner refuses to go beyond this. Harnack says, "In Jesus the divine ap-

[1] Tyrrell, p. 13.

peared in as pure a form as it can appear on earth." But demi-divinity is simply a relapse into heathenism. The Arian or quasi-Arian view of Jesus has absolutely nothing to say for itself historically, and has everything against it philosophically. It is a Christ in whom, as Prof. J. H. Green says, no philosopher who had outgrown the demonism of ancient systems, could for a moment acquiesce. More consistent, more complete, more satisfying is the Confession of the Church, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The spiritual claims of Christ are seen to be most securely founded, not ultimately upon prophecy or miracle, nor upon literal exactness of Scripture, but upon what He Himself was and is, upon the witness which our spirits bear to His spirit, "deep answering to deep."

"Subtlest thought shall fail and learning falter,
Churches change, forms perish, systems go,
But our human needs they will not alter,
Christ no after age shall e'er outgrow.
Yea, Amen! O changeless One, Thou only
Art Life's guide and spiritual goal,
Thou the Light across the dark vale lonely—
Thou the eternal haven of the soul."

J. C. SHAIRP.

This, the assertion of the spiritual Christ, has been altogether strengthened by modern criti-

cism. Here is clear gain. The basis has shifted from the intellectual to the spiritual, in which order Christ Himself most decisively founds His claim.

As a resultant from criticism, we are learning to hold some things more strongly than others. Suspense of judgment on many points is not infidelity to God: it is humility and essential allegiance. If the Holy Spirit is still guiding us into ever fuller truth, then his later lessons may well transcend the earlier. The New Testament with its written record of God's revelation must so far be a source of loss not gain, if it bind us to a literal and almost materialistic view of the operations of the Divine Spirit. The Incarnation was the manifestation of the immanent God for whom the limitations of time and space do not exist; whose presence men had largely failed to discern, although He had never left Himself without a witness in history, in nature, in conscience.

In the Acts of the Apostles we find the opening of a window into a region of never-ceasing spiritual activities, there made manifest for our sakes in temporal forms. We must beware in our thinking of creating God in our image, or forgetting that the eternal realities bear indeed a true, but only faint resemblance to the glimpses

granted to us, conditioned by the limitations of our human faculties.

As we come to understand that the spiritual is the important element in Holy Scripture, if my spirit responds to the spirit of God there striving to utter itself through imperfect words and actions of fallible men, these questions of date or authorship, of historical or of scientific accuracy, seem to be of comparatively minor importance. I was not looking for infallibility in such matters and therefore I am not disappointed. The Word of God comes to me mediated through the words of men, not free from human error and infirmity, but penetrated by the Spirit of Christ, animated by His power of life and of Salvation. Men sometimes speak, says the late Principal Caird, as if our Christian faith and hope—our belief in Christ—were a thing that stands and falls with the sifting of historical evidence, with the proof of the authenticity, credibility, and consistency of ancient documents, and the demonstrated accuracy of every incident in the records of Christ's life on earth. I believe that these records have in their substance stood the test of criticism, but I believe also that our faith in the Christ they reveal, rests on a basis more impregnable than historic evidence, even on the inward witness to the perpetual presence and operation

of the ever-living spirit of Christ, that spirit of redeeming, purifying, hallowing love that was incarnate in Him, and that is still and for ever, if we will but open our hearts to receive it, living and breathing within us. Amid much that is unsettling, amid the shifting of old and revered landmarks, Jesus the Christian Lord rules the hearts and consciences of men with ever-widening sway. As of old He sits upon the mountain round which thousands of anxious men are gathered; all are straining to hear His voice. Let us get back to Christ, they cry. Everywhere from the strife of persons and clash of dogmatisms to His person do they turn. From Him they learn that faith in God means faith in conscience, in sincerity, in truth; that apart from all other rewards and irrespective of all consequences, these are the only ends claiming our absolute and unconditional self-subjection. "However variously determined and diversely applied, these are the ultimate ends for which the saints, prophets, martyrs of all times and all places, have lived and suffered and died, and which unite them into one invisible society, one world-wide mystical Christ, one ceaseless sacrifice for the world's salvation."

[1] Tyrrell, Pref., p. 15.

III

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

" Lord to whom shall we go ?
Thou hast the words of Eternal Life."

RECEIVING the Bible as spiritually supreme, ultimately from universally acknowledged experience of its contents, are we justified in further regarding it as an external and infallible authority? After the Reformation, when the doctrines of an infallible Church had been rejected, there certainly was no intention of denying that any external and infallible authority had been granted to mankind. By Protestant and by Romanist alike, the absolute necessity for such authority was on all sides assumed.

The result of the Reformation stated in general terms was to substitute the dogma of the infallibility of the book for that of the infallibility of the Church. Yet to speak accurately, the teaching of the leading Reformers on the Continent—the German Luther, the French Calvin —was very different in regard to the Bible from that which attributes infallibility to its every syllable. Those who assume this attitude to-day towards criticism, must not imagine that they stand beside these great men of the past, or are true to the leading principle of the Reformation in its first rigour. No one believed

more firmly than Luther in the divine origin and inspiration of Holy Scripture, yet none felt more at liberty with regard to the letter and the form of the traditional collection. Their inspiration was with him not a dogma, an intellectual theory, established before the reading of the books, but a religious fact, a moral conviction created and continually renewed by the immediate contact of the conscience with the truth of God. The view of Calvin was that as things black and white reveal their colour to the eye, and things sweet and bitter reveal their flavour, so is truth to be recognised by its intrinsic character.

That Luther's work of criticism was carried no further was due to the fact that he had no successor. Historic circumstances and historic conditions, the necessity of handling sword and trowel at the same time, of contending against the traditions of the Middle Ages and the wild Utopian schemes of contemporary sects, the temptation to simplify things by setting up one infallibility against another, all these factors worked towards the unfortunate result of constituting the dogma of the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scripture. Thus was ushered in the period justly known as "The

Protestant Scholastic," which, beginning on the very morrow of the disappearance of the Reformers, and having little of spiritual community with them, is slowly dying out amongst ourselves, despite all attempts to galvanise it into fresh life. As a simple matter of historical truth, those critics in Germany, the home of the Reformation, upon whose heads such vials of contumely are poured, follow much more closely in the steps of the great Reformers, and are more largely endued with their spirit and biblical standpoint, than the somewhat intolerant defenders of so-called orthodoxy.

The Reformers were entirely right in the value they assigned to Scripture as opposed to tradition. What was the New Testament but the fixation in writing of the earliest and therefore most trustworthy traditions, which in time came thus to be embodied by the Church both for practical purposes and as the natural security against the possibility of loss or change? It we may regard as really the decision of the Christian Church as to the relative value to be placed upon Scripture and tradition. In the former was summed up all that seemed to be most valuable, most worth preservation of the current accounts of her Master's life and of the Apostolic teaching. The testimony of the Church

was for a long time not a declaration on the authority of the Church, but a declaration that such and such a tradition or document had been received by the Church from an apostolic or prophetic source. For it the supreme authority, the authority of command, was that of the words of Christ Himself; the secondary authority of interpretation and application lay in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit working in Christian men through the apostolic and prophetic office. In the literature of sub-apostolic ages we perceive how the authoritative character of the prophetic tone gradually but surely gives way to the argumentative tone of the ordinary teacher.

The canon of the New Testament, let us remember, was not so much an explicit official decision, as the total result gradually attained from the verdict of the Christian community. The felt value of the books themselves tested by lapse of time and by variety of experience has for us more than any formal authority established their canonicity. The inspiration did not come to be because of the canon: the canon came to be because of the inspiration.

The inconsistency of the position adopted at the Reformation lay in this, that appeal was made to the infallible authority of the Bible,

though the Bible itself was received upon the tradition of the Church whose infallibility was denied. Where for them could be the certainty that this fallible Church had given a correct account of the facts in the first instance, or had infallibly preserved them for subsequent generations? Protestant Scholasticism endeavoured to find for itself a satisfactory basis in the gratuitous assumption, that since there *must* be an external infallible authority in religion, and since God has bestowed this upon mankind in the Bible, therefore He *must* have infallibly provided against any possibility of error in transcription or transmission. But the laws of God's working we learn from observation not from imagination; from a study of what in fact He has done, not from a theory of what we presume He should have done. Even did we grant the inerrancy of the earliest Christian writings, for us they no longer exist, and we must content ourselves with versions admittedly imperfect.

Again, the English Reformers omitted from their Bible the Apocryphal Books, as not being in their judgment and experience of an equal spiritual value with those received. But if the tradition of the Church, accepting these books, was on this internal ground rejected,

how could it be certainly known that those received were genuine? While this test of experience is, in its own order, perfectly valid, such subjective evidence can never be the basis of an external authority for questions of literature and history. These must be decided by the principles of historical criticism, and by such they stand or fall.

Accepting then in the main the books of the Bible at the hands of the Church, as the seat of external authority in religion—though illogically rejecting those which in their estimation had not equal spiritual worth—the Reformers transmitted a theory of the authority of Scripture which could not stand examination.

The Roman Church is more logical and consistent with its premiss. Infallibility for it is not confined to a few centuries, nor incarnate in the letter of a book, which from its very nature must be obscure, inarticulate; a document of the part, responding to a definite idea of culture and civilisation. The theory of a living, infallible Pontiff—although as a matter of fact untrue in history and useless in practice—has the decided advantage. We can retrace the steps of its growth by which, the strict succession of the prophetic office, having died out obviously in individuals, was then believed

to survive in the Church as a whole. "Very gradually this took definite form round the decisions of the great councils. Still more gradually did this harden into the notion of the infallible authority of an Œcumenical Council, which as in the modern Roman Church is taken to centre in the person of the Pope." [1] This Church claims to be infallible because it has the deposit, or tradition of truth, and then because it is thus infallible, to manipulate the truth as it will!

The current orthodoxy of one day seeks to base itself upon an apparently different foundation from that of Protestant Scholasticism. For it ecclesiastical traditions do not possess any *ipso facto* validity. "The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants." Neither does it accept the inward witness of the Spirit. This may be illusory, the mere echo of prejudice. It is enough to have recourse, following Paley's method, to history. The writings of the New Testament are by the authors whose names they bear, as is proved by well-founded testimony. These writers were able to know the truth and willing to state it. Therefore the miracles of Jesus are established, historical facts, and can only have been performed

[1] "Contentio Veritatis," p. 64.

by the direct intervention of God, who thus guaranteed His Son's divinity, and moreover kept free from error the pens of the evangelists. In addition is the evidence of prophecy; and thus is established by exterior proof the divine authority of the New Testament. As regards the Old Testament, did not Jesus frequently quote its words and thus bestow upon its every page His divine sanction?

Is the dogma of the external infallibility of the Bible, by this line of argument any more convincingly established? As Sabatier points out, the famous dilemma "neither deceivers nor deceived" is so loosely constituted, that the whole reality of human history, so fraught with unconscious errors, prejudices, illusions, easily passes through it. Even were the solution of critical problems as to the date and authorship of the books of the Bible easier than it is, the fact remains that historic knowledge never can arrive at absolute certainty. Between it therefore, and religious faith, of which certainty is the essential demand, there must ever be a distinct incompatibility. What shall the unlearned Christian do, if his certainty of salvation is made to depend *e.g.* upon the authorship of St John's Gospel; a problem the intricacies of which he is unfitted to understand, much less to solve?

We may see for ourselves the glory of God in the historic Christ of the New Testament; we may be certain that that gracious, pathetic, Divine Personality was not created by any human imagination; in that historic Christ we may recognise the living and glorified Christ, through whom we ourselves have received eternal redemption; we may thus acknowledge the substantial truth of the Four Gospels, but this is not in itself a final proof that they were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. "The tradition of the Church declares that to them we owe the story of the Christ; but faith in Christ as the Son of God and Saviour and Lord of men, is something wholly different from a conviction that it is impossible for the tradition of the Church about the authorship of the Four Gospels to be erroneous."[1]

"I will not believe any Christian man," says Frederick Denison Maurice, "even upon his own testimony, who tells me that he should cease to trust in the Son of God, because he found chronological or historical misstatements in the Scriptures. If I did suspect him of such hollowness, I should pray for him that he might never meet with any travellers or philologers who confirmed the statements of Scripture, none but

[1] Dale, p. 79.

such as denied them or mocked at them, because the sooner such a foundation is shaken, the better it will be for him."

We cannot therefore establish the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures, as in themselves external authority for us, either upon the tradition of the Church, or upon the inner witness of the Spirit, or upon the testimony of fallible men. While each of those factors is of profound value in commending the Bible to us, as indeed the record of Divine Revelation, the endeavour to compel them to a conclusion beyond this, is alike dangerous and futile.

If the New Testament as a whole and in every part cannot claim to be infallible external authority for us, can this high prerogative at least be maintained as appertaining to the words of Jesus Christ? Caution and reverence is needed here lest misunderstanding confuse the issue; "This is not a question of the moral and religious authority by which Jesus and His Gospel imperatively command the conscience, but simply of the letter of the words recorded by the Evangelists and preserved in a collection in which infallibility inheres; a body of notions of every kind, religious, moral, scientific, which must be accepted without examination or discussion."[1]

[1] Sabatier, p. 229.

Amid the irreducible differences and obscurities of the canonical texts, it is simply impossible to frame the letter of that infallible code of which some Christians dream. Should not the reflection give us pause, that whereas we have almost demonstrable certainty as to our possession of the *ipsissima verba* of much that Paul the disciple wrote, the case is very different with the utterances of His Master? He who long ago stooped and wrote upon the ground, teaches us, as in a parable, a lesson which we are slow to learn! that the essence of His religion consists, not in the reduction of His teaching to a system of doctrines to be learned, but rather, through the reception of His spirit, in a lifelong *Imitatio Christi*. Our tendency is ever to fall back upon, to be satisfied with the contents of a code; Jesus would have us yield ourselves to the inspiration of a person.

We cannot then, with all reverence let us say it, base the authority of Christ over men to-day merely upon the bare and single fact that thus and thus He is reported to have once spoken, and therefore we must unquestioning obey.

At once Lessing's famous objection confronts us. "You cannot demonstrate to me that which is simply a matter of historical truth. At the utmost you can in this order only attain to pro-

bability, yet nothing short of certainty is what Christianity demands."

Upon what sure, unfailing foundation shall we base the authority of Christ, whom in heart and conscience we do own as Lord? Our *credo* must be unfaltering and clear. "Lord, to whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of Eternal Life?" The solution lies not in the logical conclusion of a syllogism, but in "deep answering to deep"; in the response of my subjective spiritual experience to Him, objective, historical fact. Christ's words "find me," as Coleridge wrote. They possess authority for me, not simply because history records that He uttered them—the religion of external authority—but also because His spirit bears witness with my spirit that they are words of truth, righteousness, life. My faith is in Him, the ever-living Lord of His Church, not in the Gospels, the human record of its progressive experience. "The venture of faith is a spiritual achievement which involves much more than the assent to certain propositions; it rests on Christ, the soul's Master, and could only be disturbed by criticism or science or history, if these studies should lead me to disbelieve this experience of Him; to distrust the assurance which He gives of His grace."

On the dual fact of outward objective history,

and of inward subjective experience, faith in Christ rests. The historical corroboration is needed, not to create faith, but to confirm it; only within are we made sure that this is of God.

Not only are we justified, but it is absolutely necessary that we exercise our judgment upon the records of the Gospels as we seek to attain the mind of Jesus. Without irreverence we may raise the question, whether the narrator has rightly understood Christ's sayings and properly connected them with the circumstances out of which they arose. The form in which they have come down to us is suited to the plan which runs through all His teaching: "If any have ears to hear, let him hear." It calls for the free play of the human mind, and leaves room for the admission of a certain choice. "The mentality, the education of the Galilean crowds formed the range of that instrument through which Christ had to convey the eternal truth of the Gospel. He could only give what they could receive. Hence we must always ask ourselves: 'What did these words mean for Peter, James, John?' before we go on to ask; 'How would He have spoken to us had He lived in our day, so as to convey the same spiritual and eternal values?'"[1] It is through the modifications produced by the

[1] Tyrrell, p. 5.

spirit of Christ displayed in the Gospel upon its environment, that its character is disclosed to us, and its implications made explicit.

If Christ in His words indeed reveals God, it follows that since God indwells in man, the human reason or conscience is divinely gifted to read what God imparts. This consciousness in man, to which the divine revelation is referred, as the only authority capable of attesting its truth, is bound in eternal ties to an infinite spirit, whose work it is to educate it up to its task. "It is not an isolated or individual thing. It exists necessarily in relationship, on the one hand with God Who is its author, and on the other with humanity. It involves in its highest, completest action, the idea of humanity as a corporate whole."[1] We do not come to the Gospels spiritually blind or wholly untaught. We know what others have found there before us, and we come to verify this collective experience of others for ourselves. The solid ground, says Reville, of our moral and religious life is experience; the individual experience of the modern man confirmed by the similar experience revealed in the history of the past, or by the observation of other people around us. For the Christian it is above all the experience of Jesus Christ.

[1] Allen, p. 392.

It may be objected—as Dr Dale points out—that the adherents of false religions can make the same appeal to experience in verification of their faith, and that therefore the argument from experience cannot be valid. The objection rests upon a false assumption. What is verified in the experience *e.g.* of a devout Mahometan is the august truth of the Prophet's message. There is one God. Of Mahomet himself he has no experience. What is verified in specific Christian experience, is that in the power, not of the truth which Christ taught, but of personal union with Christ Himself, we have our place in the eternal order and know the blessing of fellowship with God. The Mahometan may *infer* from his experience of the truth of the message, that its bearer was a prophet sent from God, and this is a valid subject for discussion. The Christian's immediate knowledge of Christ is not an inference from experience, it is *given* in experience.

When the ultimate basis of the authority of Christ is placed within and not without, no more can the objection of subjectivity be sustained than in the case of the Moral Imperative with its authoritative demands upon the honest conscience. Moreover, that this subjective treatment of the Gospels does not leave us exposed

to the capriciousness of private interpretation, may be exemplified by the analogy of the great master-pieces of art. The artistic truth is there, and those who would reach it must study to correct their faulty vision, till the common judgment of the discerning becomes their own. "The first impressions of the Gospel may be as various as the minds impressed, but we can trust to its power as an instrument of spiritual education. The longer it is pondered, the more it will shape those various minds to its own truth, and the collective experience of others will become a living experience of its own." [1]

This line of thought which we have been following is by no means new in the Christian Church. It was expressed by the father of Greek theology—Clement of Alexandria—in the second century, as it has been in the nineteenth by his great successor, Westcott of Durham. With Clement, the principle of certitude in religion lies in the consciousness of the soul. Back to it for final sanction must be referred the teaching of philosophers, prophets, apostles. It is because man is essentially made in the divine image—as the incarnation certifies—that his nature responds to the call of God,

[1] Tyrrell, p. 46.

his conscience re-echoes the commandments of God.

As we seek for the real inwardness of the present conflict between the traditional and the newer theology, we become aware that ultimately it rests upon opposing views as to the seat of authority in religion. Those who have been accustomed to regard the Bible as in all matters authoritative, with good reason resent and strive to stem the advancing tide of criticism. If we postulate an authority as infallible, Church, Bible, Pontiff, criticism is put out of court. The mere assertion of the right to criticise runs right counter to the claim of infallibility, when this prerogative is by presupposition accepted. In every human society, it is indeed most true, there is a natural and legitimate authority, which all must willingly acknowledge, for it has a definite mission to accomplish. We witness and submit to its operation in the Family, the State, the Church. That such can show itself reasonable is the justification of our submission, but it is the truth which makes authority, not the contrary.

As the life of Jesus is the supreme standard of authority for Christianity, we have the highest interest in learning it with the utmost historical accuracy, and this is absolute vindication for

applying to its records the principles of the higher criticism. Our endeavour must be to attain a knowledge of its authentic contents, not according to later tradition but according to the oldest and best sources. We must seek it also not in isolated expressions, but as an organic, purposeful, consistent whole. His teaching, says Wendt, by word and act is a unity, definite and complete, giving incomparable instruction in all that pertains to saving intercourse with God. It is of transparent simplicity even for an unlettered and childlike intelligence, and attests its own divine truth and value immediately to our consciousness without needing to be accredited by an external authority. The confirmation of the message of the Incarnate Word, from within and without, is as complete as life can give. We are so constituted as to recognise the truth which we cannot discover, and life seals the confession of the soul.

IV

THE CHRIST OF HISTORY

"Subtlest thought shall fail and learning falter,
Churches change, forms perish, systems go,
But our human needs, they will not alter,
Christ no after age shall e'er outgrow.
Yea Amen! O changeless One, Thou only
Art life's guide and spiritual goal,
Thou the Light across the dark vale lonely—
Thou the eternal haven of the soul."

SHAIRP.

CHRISTIANITY is an historical religion. Not alone did it take its rise at a definite moment in history—as did its great rival, Buddhism—but to an entirely unique extent it differs from all other religions, in that it is inseparably bound up with the life of its founder. Christ is Christianity. It is the possession of the spirit of Christ —we have His own assurance of it—which fundamentally makes a Christian, rather than, as with other faiths, the acceptance of certain teaching, or the adoption of a peculiar ethical code.

In the modern " Return to Christ " the effort is made to reconceive His earthly career, the springs of character and the motives which underlay, and were manifested in that divine life. It is indeed much to know what St John or St Paul thought of Jesus, and their individual experience of His salvation. The impression which He made upon his contemporaries, and upon the succeeding generation of Christians, is a factor, the value of which we cannot overestimate in the totality of our judgment. But, we are anxious, men say, to get beyond this;

if possible to judge for ourselves. May not the very affection which undoubtedly the disciples felt towards their Master have warped their powers of discernment? In any case we are free from the necessary limitations of their Oriental environment. Should we, were it possible, with our modern experience, to stand side by side with them, from the same data arrive at their conclusion?

All this is very natural. We have no right to taunt with scepticism or irreverence those who make such demands. Indeed thus do they show their conviction of the tremendous issues involved. If we feel no similar necessity laid upon ourselves; if faith and reason are at one in obeying the voice of the present Christ, undismayed by the questionings of criticism, let us be profoundly thankful. Eternal Life consists in His knowledge, His obedience; and the avenues by which men pass to Him are many and diverse.

> . . . . "While the sea of doubt
> Is raging wildly round about
> Questioning of life, and death, and sin;
> Let me but creep within
> Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet
> Take but the lowest seat."

At the same time let us remind ourselves, that we do possess an evidence of what Jesus essenti-

ally was, beyond the reach of those who companied with Him in the days of His flesh. In the hour of His rejection He looked onward with prophetic insight to a far-off day of triumph when He should draw all men to Himself. The partial fulfilment of His vision—the present fruits of Christendom—we fitly claim to be evidence for us, such as His deeds of power were to those who witnessed them two thousand years ago. A person is most effectually known by his work. The manifold fruits of Christianity, during all these centuries, supply us with a legitimate means of forming a true image of our Master. We fail to attain to the complete picture, if we seek to separate the manifestation of Christ in the best life of Christendom from that recorded in the pages of His gospel. Christ is most fully understood in the light which He Himself supplied. We must not imagine that Christianity would be better and more true, could we strip away everything that has gathered round it in its passage down the centuries, and restore it to the form it held in His day. We must rather, as the present Master of Balliol reminds us, regard Christ as living in and through His Church, and revealing Himself more and more fully in it. We must treat Him as a spirit which finds new organs for itself in every generation, and which through

these organs is continually developing new powers and assimilating new elements of human life. We must, to use the expression of Tennyson, look to " The Christ that is, and the Christ that is to be," as much as to the Christ that has been, as the centre of our hopes for humanity.

The Gospels and the Letters of St Paul are our earliest authorities for the life of Jesus Christ. Upon them historical criticism has been at work for more than a hundred years, subjecting them to a scrutiny more searching and minute than has been the case with any other documents of history. With confidence we may now affirm, that in the judgment of the foremost critics, with few exceptions, their genuineness has been vindicated; and the attitude of suspicion which marred so much of earlier criticism has been shown to be unreasonable. The " mythical " theory of Strauss and the " tendency " theory of Baur are seen no more to offer a reasonable solution of the origin of Christianity, than does the " verbal inspiration " theory of its transmission. And yet, as we look back upon the writings of these men, with that dispassionateness which the lapse of time renders possible, let us frankly recognise and profit by the underlying truths which gave value to their work. No longer can we refuse to acknowledge that the

figure of Jesus as presented to us in the Gospels is relative to the thoughts of the first generation of Christians. "The Apostles were not raised by the enlightenment of the Spirit above the limitations of their time, nor could they grasp the complete significance of a personality that bore relations to all times and to all conditions. The earthly manifestation of the Son of God had an infinite fulness and the comprehension of it is naturally a gradual discovery, widening with the thought and experience of men."

Had we—as Prof. Sanday remarks—witnessed His life, and yet retained our modern mental equipment, our report would probably in many respects have been different. Indeed could it have been otherwise, unless we lift the whole story out of the category of human experience? Had Christ been manifested, not two thousand years ago, but in our Western world to-day, we most reasonably believe that His manifestation would be in accord with all the conditions, mental, and social, under which we now live, and we should describe Him according to the thought and language of modern life. So again we can fully acknowledge the keenness of Baur's insight as he strove to fix attention upon that conflict, which is undoubtedly a key to much of early

[1] Forrest, p. 333.

Christianity—the struggle between Jewish particularism and the universalism of St Paul. It is true that Baur exaggerates both its extent and intensity, but he has enabled us to read with a more vivid perception Gospel and Epistle, as we recognise the fact that Our Lord's followers did take opposite views of the relation in which their faith in Him placed them towards their Jewish brethren.

The question which presented itself at the close of the last century was this : How will the Books of the New Testament stand the test of historical inquiry on scientific principles ? With confidence we may answer, that it has shown them to be genuine works, with scarcely any exception, of the first century, representing with great fidelity the beliefs of the Christian Church within fifty years of the death of Jesus. The verdict of a radical critic such as Harnack is, that there is no book of the New Testament,—except 2 Peter—the tradition of which has not some substantial ground : although it is with important qualifications that he accepts the genuineness of the Fourth Gospel, the Pastoral and Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse. So far then we stand on firm ground. As we turn over the pages of the New Testament, we are reading the very words which men wrote during the second half of the first

century of the Christian era. In these writings, let us bear in mind, the textual critic seldom feels that need of conjecture, which is so imperative in the case of the Old Testament. There, an interval of many centuries separates the oldest extant Hebrew MSS. from the dates at which the books were composed. We stand much too near to the New Testament autographs, to have recourse to conjecture, save in the most sparing degree. Before the modern student are MSS. both Greek and Latin, going back to the fourth century: versions such as the Latin and Syriac of the second century: quotations from the fathers in abundance from A.D. 150 onwards.

The writings which most directly concern us for the Life of Jesus, are, as we have seen, the Gospels and Epistles of St Paul. This Apostle's First Epistle to the Thessalonians is the first piece of Christian literature which has an independent existence. Written about twenty years after the crucifixion, it already assumes in its readers considerable knowledge of the main facts in the life of Jesus, His death and resurrection. It is, however, to the Gospels that we turn with the greatest expectancy and here we find surest foothold amid the common matter of the synoptists. We cannot at least be mistaken, if we regard those words and actions of Jesus which they

record as being in agreement with the generally received tradition of their day. Indeed, it is with just such an acknowledgment that one of them, St Luke, prefaces his narrative.

The subject matter of the Gospels is mainly the oral tradition of the apostles. To "guard the deposit" was the sacred duty of the evangelists. This oral tradition was the apostolic testimony to the things which they themselves had seen and heard of the ministry of Jesus, and therefore it is lacking as to the Lord's birth and to the silent years. Our information here in all probability comes, in St Matthew's Gospel from Joseph: in St Luke's from Mary. How shall we account for the fact that this oral tradition ends with the crucifixion and omits the supreme event of the resurrection, of which the apostles themselves had been witnesses? It may have been owing to the very notoriety and certainty of the event; fresh as it was in every mind, it was the supreme burden of the apostolic preaching and most unlikely to be forgotten or distorted. It may have seemed to them enough to proclaim the fact and keep His words and deeds fresh in remembrance. Possibly also it was deemed needless as the Lord's return was believed to be at hand. Even St John hesitates when he comes to speak of the resurrection. In his

gospel, its story is told, says Renan, in a postscript. John is drawing near his end and the Master has not returned, so, as the tradition runs, yielding to the importunities of the believers, he wrote the wondrous story.

> "Imminent was the outcry, 'Save our Christ!'
> Whereon I stated much of the Lord's life
> Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work."

In revealing what happened by the Sea of Galilee after the resurrection, John may also have been moved by the desire to silence the wild story which had got abroad concerning himself, that he should tarry till his Master's return. In truth, as the writer of "The Days of His Flesh" remarks, it is no marvel that the apostles were here so reticent. The story was too sacred to be divulged. "My mystery is for me and the Sons of my House."

The Gospels in their written form grew out of the necessities of the developing infant Church. The writers do not profess to be biographers, nor do they attempt to give an exact and detailed account of the life of Jesus. For such a biography, Edersheim reminds us, we do not possess the materials. Amid very general agreement in their narratives, we trace, and strive to account for, certain differences in detail. That they were received and accredited by the Christian com-

munity, itself largely conversant with the tradition as to their Master's life, is guarantee of their worth, even though the writings be anonymous. To the commanding and authoritative position gradually attained by these Canonical Gospels, must be attributed the remarkable fact, that scarcely any of the sayings of Jesus, other than those here recorded, have survived. The author of the fourth Gospel affirms that at the later date when he wrote, many such were in circulation, but for some reasons unknown to us, the evangelical writers did not embody them in their gospels, and elsewhere there existed no suitable literature for their preservation.

The literary connection between the different synoptical writers is so close, that we are compelled to fall back upon some theory of their inter-dependence. At the same time, we cannot fail to notice from internal evidence, divergences both of style and purpose. St Mark, the earliest —dating probably from the fortieth year after the crucifixion—is the basis of the other two, and expresses the Christian ideas in their barest and simplest form. Throughout, an existing Church with traditions, worship, institutions is assumed. We find in it clear traces of growth in the teaching of Jesus, and of that startling impression of originality which He made upon His disciples.

In all probability St Peter was the writer's chief source of information, the reminiscences of whose preaching the Church of the second century, according to Eusebius, believed this Gospel to contain.

St Matthew's Gospel represents the effort to set forth the impression which Jesus made upon an orthodox Jew, eager to find in Him the realisation of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. That this application does to us frequently appear far-fetched and over-strained, in no way detracts from the general fidelity of the evangelists' representation. Having set forth the facts known to him, in like manner as the other synoptists, he proceeds to interpret them in accordance with his own preconceptions. The writer of the first Gospel appears also to have occasionally modified the tradition as he found it in his chief authority, St Mark. So conscious is he of the divinity of his Master, that he will not see in His life any manifestation of human failure, ignorance, weakness; and consequently, here and there in his pages, there is a modification and softening of parallel passages in St Mark. For us St Matthew's history is more important than his interpretation, though it also is full of interest, as supplying that background of Jewish thought and expectation, against which, and

often in contrast, stands out the commanding figure of our Lord.

As we read St Luke, we find ourselves in the company of a man of literary and poetic power, in touch with a wider world than Jewry, and influenced deeply by the universalising spirit of St Paul.

In modern phrase we may say that the authors of the first and third Gospels have re-edited St Mark, using his narrative as a framework and fitting into it sayings (λόγια) drawn from an independent source. Such λόγια were most probably collected in their Hebrew form by St Matthew, whose name and authority thus became transferred to the first Gospel. In addition to these, there are some passages peculiar to St Matthew and St Luke, and absent from St Mark. These deal chiefly with the infancy of Jesus and His appearances after the resurrection. What is their origin and how do we explain their absence from the earlier record, or from St Paul's account, which must have corresponded with the earliest tradition of all, as told to him when he first became a Christian ? It is indeed possible to frame reasonable conjectures on these questions, but it is well frankly to acknowledge, that the evidence for such accounts as that of the virgin birth—found alone in the first and third Gospels—must find corroboration along other lines of proof, for

their historical character is not so strong as of those which the synoptists set forth in common. "A candid treatment of the whole subject must lead us to the conclusion that the infancy narratives are of such a character that they would not be accepted apart from the wonderful life to which they are the prelude." [1] In the opinion of critics, by no means of the extreme school, the narratives of the infancy in St Matthew and St Luke, are historical only in the sense that they reflect the consciousness of the early Church, and her attitude of adoration towards the Lord. In our desire for truth, we shall not obstinately close our ears to such criticism, but rather fairly weigh it, placing in the other scale the weighty arguments for the orthodox belief, as *e.g.* that of Bishop Gore, who fairly urges, that the narratives of the infancy would, owing to their very nature, be naturally withheld from publicity, until special circumstances called for their disclosure. On this question two most important considerations—the one historical, the other theological—merit very serious consideration. (1) Objection is raised on the ground that two only out of the four Gospels give the account of the virgin birth. Is it not significant that the strongest arguments against the miraculous event are

[1] Prof. Adeney, p. 25.

founded on passages contained in the very Gospels which affirm the fact—Matthew and Luke? (2) Our faith in the divinity of Christ does not rest on our admission of the virginity of His mother. It is a disastrous mistake to insist upon binding these two questions up together, so that to reject the one is to reject the other. St Peter and St Paul, St John and St James, St Mark and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, all believed in the divinity of Christ on other grounds. None of them makes the slightest reference to the manner of Our Lord's birth. Believing in the far greater wonder of the Incarnation we may be prepared to admit the minor wonder of the Bethlehem story, though not otherwise. A sinless Christ is the proper object of faith. Under what conditions such a Christ is possible is a very important question, but as Prof. Bruce points out, it belongs to theology rather than to religion.

In the fourth Gospel admittedly we breathe a different atmosphere from that of the synoptists, and move amid the ideas and modes of speech of Alexandrine philosophy. The author —if not St John, one of the Johannine school at Ephesus—combines a unique knowledge of the life of Jesus, with a profound interpretation of that life. The work we feel to be that of a

Christian philosopher and theologian, who seeks to find the lineaments of the eternal behind its manifestation in time, and who gives to the commonly received beliefs of the Church a spiritual and universal form. The question of authorship is a most complex one. There is very strong evidence of the second century in favour of ascribing it to St John; while on the other hand the internal evidence against this view is not to be overlooked. Professor Drummond (Manchester College), has pronounced decidedly in favour of the Johannine authorship. "If John did not write it," he asks, "who did? None whose words have survived were capable. Is it likely that there lived and died amongst them, entirely unknown, a man who throughout the century, had absolutely no competitor in the wealth, depth, and originality of his genius?" The chief difficulty in admitting the apostolic authorship is the acknowledged mental and spiritual difference between the Jewish apostle of the Lord, lovable, impetuous, illiterate, full of Jewish hopes and Jewish exclusiveness, who disappears from the New Testament page, A.D. 52, and him who forty-seven years later stands forth as a religious genius, capable of translating historical fact into terms of religious experience.

If we recognise in it to-day, as we assuredly do,

the Supreme Gospel; the highest and truest presentation of the spirit and work of Christ; if to the perplexed and sorrowful it ever comes as a minister of guidance and consolation; if to the ultimate test of experience it rings true, is its spiritual value the less, because in the providence of God, its author must remain unknown?

What Prof. Bruce says of the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews is equally true as regards this Gospel. No one possessing due insight doubts the right of this Epistle to a place in the authoritative literature of the Christian religion. But few now set value on the reason which induced the ancient Church, after long hesitation, to recognise its canonicity, viz., that it had the Apostle Paul for its author.

The worth of the Bible depends little upon this literary question of authorship. From the Gospels we desire above all else a faithful record of the life of Jesus Christ and modern criticism assures us that such we do possess. The originality of the portrait here presented to us is the strongest evidence of its genuineness. The differences in detail which the evangelists present lie patent on the face of their narrative, and nowise detract from their worth. The mind of the historian can never be a *tabula rasa*, and the attempt to harmonise the Gospels on every point

and at all costs, is the natural result of an untenable theory of inspiration, and in the end but produces a fictitious semblance of uniformity.

What Matthew Arnold said of the doctrines set forth in the fourth Gospel—" They cannot be the writer's invention, because they are so clearly out of his reach "—bears a wider application. This Gracious Figure to which for nineteen hundred years the devout allegiance of Christendom has been given, cannot possibly be the creation of commonplace men, living in an obscure province of the Roman Empire. The very depth of their frequent misunderstanding of Him, so artlessly appearing in their pages, is really a kind of measure of the height of His superiority. History, as Prof. Fairbairn reminds us, is on the whole a scene of order and of progress. Apart from Jesus Christ the history of the last two thousand years must remain inexplicable. To it He is absolutely necessary, so that therefore He is the last person that can be conceived as an accident or creation of chance. What is the apostolical theology but an attempt to explain His place in the providential order of the world; His necessity on the one hand to God, and on the other to man? By it God was shown to be man's Father, man God's son, and the very notion of their relation involved the affinities of their natures, the distinct-

ness of their personalities, the community and connection of their lives. Through faith in Jesus faith in God has lived upon the earth, and the sense of His presence has been not only the life of His religion, but of all its manifold beneficences. "Certainly this theology cannot be construed as a mere chapter in the history of human speculation, for within it live the forces that have made the religion of Christ the religion of civilised man, and man it has civilised" [1] The fundamental fact in Christianity is not the truths taught by Christ about God and man, but the embodiment which they found in Him; the supreme and solitary character of His personal life. Objection has been made to the supremacy of Christ's claim, because sayings akin to His may be quoted from other of the world's great religious teachers. The objection loses its point when we remember that His uniqueness does not consist in His teaching. It is in the Christian character, of which He was the perfect example, and by the stamp of which His disciples are everywhere to be known. Even of the Lord's Prayer, we must not be surprised to learn, the several phrases taken singly and literally, were familiar to every pious Jew of His day. They were His only by tradition and by adoption. "We must take

[1] Fairbairn, p. 384.

them as part of a complex, organic whole, each in the light of all the rest, and all in the light of His whole life of action and utterance : we must look to the sayer as well as to what is said." [1]

The saintliest lives of Christendom do but suggest a perfect character, which they themselves confessedly fail to attain. Away from them must we look to see it in its purity and perfection. We cannot be satisfied with regarding it as a mere fancy or unrealised ideal. It is needed as an historical reality to account for all these approximations to completed goodness, and the elements of it are all to be observed in the nature of Jesus Christ, as delineated in the Gospels. The reality of His life manifested at a definite moment in history " is ascertained with increasing confidence as one traces back the stream of Christian history to Him as its pure and necessary spring." [2]

Objection has been raised to the doctrine of the perfection of Christ's character—to the incarnation—that it is against all the analogies which evolution presents. Those who place the fulness of perfection at the origin of Christianity are, it is said, victims of the same illusion as the ancients, who placed the Golden Age at the beginning of human history. There is misunder-

[1] Tyrrell, p. 84. [2] Ferries, p. 135.

standing here. As the coming of Christ was not an accident, so neither was it an anomaly. In the Bible itself His coming is distinctly related to a long past of preparation of which He was the flower and the fruit. God's sending of His Son as man was not an act of catastrophic violence in human history. Jesus Christ was no mere "*Deus ex machina*"; no afterthought to repair damage unexpectedly wrought in the divine order. He and His work are in sympathy with that progress of human affairs which began before history and whose end is

> "That far-off, divine event
> To which the whole creation moves."

The incarnation was not the simple product of this world's evolution, but it contains and conveys the latest and highest manifestation and communication of those forces which work in evolution. Its purpose was to inaugurate a new era, not to preclude the possibility of any further advance. He who was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," came on earth to reveal to us the *Father*, and gives us the Holy Spirit to reveal *Himself*, to exhibit a Christophany in the life of humanity. The Christ stands before men as a race organised for social living, and announces a new stage in its evolutionary history. In this the power of God, which has been within

humanity as a part of nature, stands now beside men. In the Christ God recognises that men are ready to be spoken to in a new language, and invited to a new progress. In the Christ there was begun an assumption of humanity on to a new level, and into a new sphere.

Jesus declares that He is the Way, the Truth, the Life ; that the world of men is to follow Him, be like Him, filled with His Spirit ; through Him have access to the Father. Has anyone the right, with due regard to the claims of his own personality, to yield himself thus unreservedly in the great concerns of the spiritual life to such a complete obedience, unless indeed assured that the voice which calls him is divine ? Of this the external evidence is manifold and multiform. The Christ of experience is no mere subjective concept of our own consciousness ; it has its firm basis in the Christ of history, to which it must ever and again return, that its blurred outlines may be clarified and deepened. The fact of Christ, *pace* Matthew Arnold, is prose not poetry, for the actuality of which we have the Gospels, interpreted merely as historical documents, *plus* the unbroken experience of the Christian Church.

A recent writer in the *Hibbert Journal*[1] has used

[1] January 1905.

with admirable effect an illustration borrowed from Mr Bosanquet's essay "The True Conception of Another World," in his endeavour to point out the distinction between the Christ of history and the Christ of experience, as not "existing side by side in the same world." In a picture the beauty is as real as the pigments. If anyone does not perceive the beauty but only the colours, and deems it to be the creation of our fancy, we should know that the error was on his side, not on ours. In a material sense physical dissection would reveal canvas and paint and nothing else. These, therefore, must belong to a different order from the beauty of the picture, and do not "exist side by side in the same world." In the same way historical criticism will find in the life of Christ a human history and nothing besides; no superhuman mode of consciousness. To the Christian, who is not a mere historian, this same life will rightly appear as a revelation of the inmost nature of God.

Jesus Christ can never be the soul's Master upon the single basis of historical proof. The walls of space and time and circumstance must fall back, that to an ever-present, ever-living Lord we may yield a full and glad obedience.

V

THE MIRACULOUS ELEMENT

"Of the two grounds on which Our Lord claimed men's allegiance—His personal influence and the signs He worked —He rests preferably on the former, but the second has its place, and it is an important one. In different ages men require different kinds of proof. Miracles are not the sort of evidence most wanted now; but it was the sort which for many centuries was looked on as the most incontrovertible." LATHAM.

THE mediæval painters were obeying a true instinct, when they depicted the actors in the New Testament story as clad in the garb, and moving amid the surroundings of the Italy of their day, rather than of ancient Palestine. As we read the Gospels, their foreignness of environment, their modes of religious and social thought and life, tend to deprive them of reality for us, to make them appear a far-off tale, aloof and detached from those living personal interests which concern ourselves. An effort of the instructed imagination is required from all who seek in history to penetrate to the working of universal vital forces, beneath all differences of age or climate or custom.

In the order of God's providence the incarnation took place at a definite point in space and time. To believe the fact is for us of infinitely greater import than to understand the method. The fact demonstrates the eternal human nature of God; the method might conceivably, under differing circumstances, have assumed a different form. That writer or painter is doing invaluable service to his generation, who teaches it to grasp

the eternal behind the temporary phenomenon, to regard the letter but as the medium through which the essential spirit is, however imperfectly, revealed.

To this foreignness of environment which meets us in the New Testament—as indeed in all history that lies apart from the highway of our own experience—the miraculous furnishes the most striking element. Here we move in an atmosphere absolutely unfamiliar, breathing, as we do, the keen air of science. Records of the miraculous in secular history, we have been taught to regard as the childish imaginings of an earlier age, or of an undeveloped race, in their desire to account for the origin of saints and heroes, or to invest them with unearthly glory. In unscientific ages belief in miracles is not a sign of piety. Everybody shares it, it puts no strain on conscience or reason; it is simply the most obvious, most natural way to explain the unusual. The Jews and King Herod saw nothing improbable in the supposition that Christ was Elijah, or even John the Baptist, who had just been beheaded. The whole account given by St John (chap. ix.) of the healing of a blind man is a most vivid and comprehensive commentary upon the attitude towards miracle of that age. To a generation trained to read history in the

modern temper, it is most natural that our historical sense should feel startled, when in the Gospels we are invited to receive miraculous statements as verified facts. The New Testament student is perfectly justified, indeed he owes it to himself as a seeker after truth, in most carefully investigating the grounds upon which this demand is made. And further: compelled as he must be by the weight of the evidence, to acknowledge the supernatural element in the Gospels, he is certainly not thereby precluded from critically examining the various miracles recorded, and accepting some as genuine, while others he assigns to a different order. "When Prof. Goldwin Smith insists that all the miracles recorded in the Gospels stand or fall together, he is going in the teeth, not so much of anything peculiar to the study of the Gospels, but of the historical method generally." [1]

Of course, if it be claimed that the criteria applicable to secular matters are out of place in the study of Christian history, then let us frankly admit, that in the modern sense the latter is not history at all. But Christianity claims to be an historical religion; and we who profess this faith must not shirk the tests of historical verification. It is not sufficient to assert that, having already

[1] Prof. Sanday.

received the Gospels, as in the main faithful accounts of the life of Jesus, we have thereby implicitly accepted as fact each detail, such as those of the several miracles. What is this but to be guilty of that fallacy, to which piety has been ever liable, of bringing to the study of the Gospels a presupposition of their literal exactness, which being itself miraculous, at once lifts them out of the category of historical documents and experience ?

We receive the four Gospels as genuine records of that impression which Jesus made upon the first generation of Christians. To the sum of that impression many and various strands contributed, of which one undoubtedly was, belief in Him as possessing supernatural power. Even were it admitted with Schmiedel that the facts of His life were modified by the evangelists, who being *in some way* convinced of His supernatural character, could not help decking it out with miraculous embellishment, so all the more should we have in these alleged miracles proof of this conviction left upon their minds as the result of His life. If it be alleged that the evangelists in an uncritical age, attaching miraculous occurrences to One whose moral character—whose holiness—they felt to be unique, are by so doing discredited in all respects as witnesses, an obvious

answer is at hand. "The critical eye for character has been but little developed in nineteen hundred years; the critical eye for nature has been enormously sharpened within the last century. It need not surprise us if there should be an acquiescence in the possibility of error in regard to the latter, while error in regard to the former is treated as absent."[1] Moreover, this hypothesis of the introduction of miracle into the story of the life of Jesus by the evangelists in the second half of the first century, overlooks the fact that, as we can learn from the Acts and the Epistles of St Paul, remarkably little account was made of Christ's miracles in that generation. This is a strong historical argument therefore against the position that in the days when the Gospels were written there existed any such miracle-tendency amongst the disciples.

Theories of imposture on the part of Jesus and credulity in the disciples, so prevalent in the mental atmosphere of the eighteenth century filled with shallow rationalism, are now universally discredited. Some better reason must be found to account for the phenomenon. Strauss admitted that if the Gospels be received as historical records, it is impossible to eliminate the miracles of Jesus: while Prof. Seely—author of "Ecce

[1] "Contentio Veritatis," p. 145.

Homo"—adds, that the fact that Christ appeared as a worker of miracles is the best attested fact in His whole biography. There are indeed those who accept these statements of Strauss and Seely and yet find in them no verification of the miracles as objective occurrences. Upon such we should urge consideration of the fact, indissolubly bound up with the Gospels, that Jesus Himself believed that deeds were worked by Him, such as none other ever performed. Further, we have no right to assert, that because certain preconceptions and expectations did at that period exist, therefore, on that account, any fact, however well attested, which falls under the head of miracle, must be summarily rejected. As Mr Illingworth points out, the fact of the expectation does not logically make invention a likelier alternative than occurrence, except upon one hypothesis, that the occurrence is impossible. But this is what logicians style, begging the question. Moreover, let us remember that such a miraculous event as the incarnation itself was, as we shall see, quite out of the range of Jewish ideas, and rather repugnant to their austere and transcendental conception of God.

As a matter of fact this question of the miracles of Jesus, has come, from the shifting of human thought, to occupy quite a different position to

that which it formerly held, especially from the standpoint of Christian evidence. No scientific man now ventures to assert that the matter is settled by the bare statement that miracles are impossible; on the other hand, every student reads history with the tacit assumption that when he meets an account of the miraculous in its pages, it is much more likely that the historian was mistaken than that such an event really took place. There is practically unanimous agreement now that this is a question of probability, only to be decided by examination of the total factors in each case. "It is quite unscientific to attempt to treat Christ's miracles *in vacuo*, as a mere break in the continuity of nature, and to take no account of their quality, underlying purpose, relation to surrounding circumstances."[1] The question is essentially a particular one. Is this or that miracle or series of miracles credible, in view of the facts as a whole?

A leading scientist (Sir Oliver Lodge, Principal of Birmingham University) puts this subject of the credibility of miracles thus. Are we to believe, he asks, in irrefragable law? Are we to believe in spiritual guidance? The alternative to these two beliefs is a universe of random and capricious disorder; not a cosmos, a *multiverse*

[1] Forrest, p. 117.

rather. We may and should contemplate and gradually feel our way towards accepting both. We must realise that the whole is a single, undeviating, law-saturated cosmos, but we must also realise that the whole consists not of matter and motion alone, nor yet of spirit and will alone, but of both and all.

The explanation of the miracles in the New Testament, which to many seems most reasonable, is that the people of that age did not discriminate as we do between fact and imagination; that those sequences of cause and effect, which we summarise as "Laws of Nature," were by them not understood; that they regarded as miraculous what frequently was simply the unusual, or the result of perfectly natural causes now manifest to us. It is perfectly true, as they point out, that unscientific ages did look upon nature with different eyes from us, for whom God has so largely withdrawn the veil which shrouded His operations. In studying the records of the miracles of Jesus we must not forget the evidences in their Old Testament writings that the Jewish race was not exempt from the tendency to expect exceptional powers over nature from their teachers and prophets, and also that in the days of Jesus Himself, they showed this predisposition, by not seeking to deny the possibility of His

miracles, but by ascribing them to Beelzebub. This miracle-tendency, we are reminded, meets us in the Middle Ages, as in the lives of St Francis of Assissi and of St Thomas of Canterbury : while the Roman Church furnishes well-known instances in modern days. There is indeed, frequently evident confusion, even mendacity in these accounts, but at times we can see how they arose out of the inability, very natural to the uneducated, to distinguish between that which is within and that which is without, between man and nature.

In all this there is undoubtedly a large element of truth, and where a natural explanation is possible we have no warrant for falling back upon a supernatural one. As regards our Lord's miracles of healing especially, psychical science may have much to teach us, and if it be meant that these wonderful works are the natural result of our Lord's wonderful personality, and are not contraventions of nature, but the manifestation of laws which work on a higher plane than is commonly cognisable by us, little objection can be taken. But beyond this there remains the undoubted fact that Jesus believed Himself to work miracles in the ordinary sense of the term, *e.g.* to perform actions which seem impossible for man, outside the reach of human power. The

truth is, the personality of Jesus as we shall see —altogether apart from the question of physical miracle, at His birth, during His life and after His death—is so different from anything of which humanity has had experience, that we have no *data* for argument as to what He could or could not do in the physical order. In His divine mysterious life with its perfect consciousness of the Father, the boundaries between what we, in our ignorance, name natural and supernatural, tend to fade away, as His clear gaze passes beyond the limits of our short-sighted vision and rests upon the immanent, ever-working God, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work."

We believe in the continuity of nature. As Christians we hold that in nature God is ever revealing Himself to us, and the marks which she so plainly bears, are marks of order and of uniformity. At the same time our conceptions of God and of nature are widening and deepening. We too form part of nature. For us she exists, and her operations we can in part control. Upon her and upon human beings we can bring to bear forces intangible, invisible, yet with far-reaching results; so that we must be slow to define the capacities of higher spiritual powers, by the boundaries of our limited spiritual experience.

To accept the exercise of human will-power as non-contradictory of the uniformity of nature, while denying the intervention of divine, is to occupy an impossible position. It also involves a false antithesis, to assert that we have no right to expect that the order of nature shall be altered in deference to the insignificant interests of man, for man and nature are inseparable parts of one whole.

Mr Illingworth rightly insists that the conviction of the absolute worth of our personality is inherent in the very make and constitution of man. As such it is a phenomenon, or part of the universe, and as real as any other of its parts. There is not, therefore, an order of nature on one side, and human interest on the other; but a combination of two elements of which one possesses the attribute of claiming supremacy over the other. To assert that this order is not likely to be altered for man, is to contradict our fundamental conception of the relative importance of the two. No such argument from moral improbability can be raised against miracle as such.

May not the very tendency on the part of man to invest his saints with superhuman power over nature, be an ineradicable witness on his part to the conviction that this world exists for man and

that matter serves a spiritual end? That he has often gone astray in his application of this principle, does not disprove its truth. That it has even predisposed him to expect the sway of the spiritual over the physical, is no argument, as we have already seen, against the possibility of such having taken place. We are not compelled to think of a break, a discontinuity in nature in the case of the miracles of Jesus. The ordinary laws of inorganic matter are daily being interfered with by life, which has higher laws of its own. We know by experience, that through the exercise of a spiritual power, the will, laws of nature are directed towards our ends. If this be the case with us, spiritually imperfect as we confessedly are, what may we not reasonably expect in the case of one spiritually perfect, as Jesus Christ? If the laws of nature be the expression of the will of God, we may be confident that in no case were they contravened by Him whose whole life was complete fulfilment of the divine obedience.

Bishop d'Arcy has given very thoughtful treatment to the subject of the presuppositions of miracle in his "Idealism and Theology." We must neither ignore the regular movements of physical causation, that we may prove the existence of the transcendent God of Deism, nor must

we slight the great creative epochs, lest by recognising them we should take away from the perfection of the divine immanence. Nature, which is full of reason, order, necessity, exhibits also a contingent element, and these unite to form a great universal system and conspire to bring about that "great, far-off, divine event, to which the whole creation moves." If the coming of the kingdom of the good requires miracle—the contingent element—miracle will be, and will prove its divine origin in all cases by possessing a universal significance with a view to the realisation of the good. Miracles are divine, in so far as they bear a divine character. This is the essential test, apart from the fact of their being wonderful or superhuman exhibitions of power, wisdom, or even goodness. Have they a universal scope, and do they occur in a manner which proves them to be turning-points on the way to the kingdom of God—the consummation and realisation of the highest good? This is precisely the character of the Christian miracles of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Of all the events in human history they possess the most universal significance; and also they are most clearly designed—as experience has proved—to promote the coming of the kingdom.

This question of the probability, and conse-

quently of the credibility of the miracles of Jesus, is really part of the larger question of the incarnation. In all the great epochs of cosmic history can be discerned the intervention of some creative power. "At last in the very focus of human history, appears a person who in character, moral influence, universality of relation to mankind, in the position which He actually holds with regard to the kingdom of the good, is absolutely unique, a miracle among men. Here is another turning-point in the history of development, how are we to regard it? Surely it is the work of the same personal agent which operated at the other epochs. And since the peculiarity of the case consists in the fact that a miraculous person has appeared, whose life has universal significance with a view to the realisation of the kingdom of the good, the inevitable conclusion must be that it is He Himself." [1] If the unique holiness and positive character of Christ be a fact; if He alone of all knew no sin: if He is conscious of a filial relationship to God, quite distinct from the Sonship which He taught other men that they possessed, this is indeed, in the moral order, a miracle unparalleled. It stands in direct contradiction to the entire experience of humanity, which on this point being summarised, we regard

[1] Bishop d'Arcy, "Idealism and Theology," p. 161.

as a law of human nature. The belief that all men sin, fall short of the moral ideal, is based in such an overwhelming induction from experience, that the improbability of a departure from that uniformity is, *a priori*, almost inconceivable. We have the *data* in the words which Jesus spoke, in His attitude towards others, on which we can form our opinion of what He was. "We see there united in one perfect character two characteristics which the uniform experience of mankind has pronounced incompatible. Jesus possessed a soul with an extreme sensitiveness of spiritual perception, and, at the same time a consciousness of complete and unbroken loyalty to His Father's will."[1] To such a character there is no antecedent or subsequent parallel. It is unique in human history and can be verified to an extent far beyond what is possible in the case of His physical miracles. If therefore it be admitted, as it is, that Jesus far transcends human experience on one side of His nature, no *a priori* objection of incredibility can be sustained against His uniqueness on the other. Those who maintain a naturalistic theory of the universe attempt to make this fact of the sinlessness of Jesus—this solitary phenomenon in the history of mankind—appear as natural as possible. This

[1] Forrest, p. 119.

is indeed for them most necessary because it has to be remembered that "Faith is ever in a state of unstable equilibrium while the supernatural is dealt with eclectically; admitted in the moral and spiritual sphere, denied in the physical."[1] The problem is: How, in accordance with the doctrine of evolution, did the absolute moral ideal appear in this world so long ago? Could the humanity which was to be redeemed have produced the Redeemer from its own power: *i.e.* Could it have redeemed itself? Altogether apart from acceptance or rejection of the birth-stories, the question arises: Was Christ merely a product of humanity, whose origin is satisfactorily explained by heredity? Those, who from the study of His life and character, are led to the conviction that He was more akin to God than to man, between the two alternatives of evolution and incarnation, unhesitatingly choose the latter, conscious though they be of the difficulties which such a conception involves.

From the very reserve manifested by Jesus in His miracles, we can see that there is of necessity no absolute and essential connection between physical marvels and spiritual uniqueness, and it is upon the latter not the former that

[1] Bruce, "Apologetics," p. 410.

He most confidently bases His claim. They are not of equal and interchangeable value. Christ's holiness is not an inference from His works, but our conviction as to the former predisposes towards acceptance of the latter upon clear and valid testimony of their occurrence.

The miracles of Jesus are not therefore by themselves, and of necessity, to be considered as proof of His divine mission nor did He Himself so regard them, for the crowning miracle of His resurrection stands on a quite different plane, and merits consideration apart. So considered, they are parables of the providence of God and of the subordination of nature to spirit. Yet while we must not regard them as a proof externally supplied to a message which is independent of them, these works of His are part of that message, and do, as wrought by Him, possess a peculiar evidential quality. They set before us the Father whom Jesus revealed, and in dependence upon whom they were performed, as loving and wise and strong. The wonderful acts are true to the nature of God, are revelations of that nature, are signs to corroborate the teaching. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Christ's miracles of healing proclaim *social* salvation, however subordinate in value as com-

pared with *soul* salvation, as nevertheless an essential part of God's redemptive purpose. He was equally removed from the one-sidedness of the mere social reformer, who sees salvation in material well-being, as from that ultra-spiritualism which is akin to Manichæism. His nature-miracles assert the supreme claims of the kingdom and the certainty that at all hazards its claims will be vindicated. In the Gospels it is asserted that the faith quickened by a sense of the personal majesty of Jesus is more trustworthy than a faith founded on His miracles. His divine claims were most fully recognised by the spiritually sensitive, by those who were attracted to Him by spiritual affinities. "But His miracles served as object-lessons for those as yet unable to appreciate divine goodness, the glory that consisted in humiliation and in being the servant of all." [1]

Too frequently the works of Jesus have been set forth in such fashion, such omnipotence and omniscience have been ascribed to Him, in the apparent interest of Christianity, as to isolate Him, to cut Him aloof from those whom He calls His brethren. He has been compared, as by Godet, with the great intellectual leaders of the world, and it has been claimed that He

[1] Prof. Dods, p. 230.

would have excelled each in his own department of human knowledge. "This is to seek as the Jews did, to honour Him with an earthly crown. He enters into no such rivalry, but remains enthroned apart, the Lord of the spiritual world."[1] The works which Jesus did, the Gospels assure us, were wrought, not through power lodged in Himself as its source, but by the power of His Father in answer to prayer, working through His obedient manhood. Insufficient attention has been given to the statement of Jesus that this power of working miracles was within the reach of everyone who believed in God, implying that even He Himself did not depend upon any power necessarily peculiar to Himself, nor upon the magic of His own personality, but upon His closeness to the Father. In them, the supernatural action of God, comprehended in His immanence in His whole creation, veiled in its usual operations, manifests itself, as at special points, for high purposes of revelation and of attestation. God is always present and working in Nature, but "The very constancy and uniformity of nature's order, caused man to be blind to His presence. This is reasserted in the miracles of Jesus."[2]

In reply to the Baptist's pathetic message

[1] Forrest, p. 106. [2] Gore, p. 44.

from his prison-cell at Machærus, Jesus pointed to His works of healing in corroboration of His claim, and with them coupled as on the same evidential plane the preaching of the Gospel to the poor. He added "Blessed are they who shall find no occasion of stumbling in Me." To demand a belief in His physical miracles as essential preliminary, from all who seek in heart and conscience to follow Him, is indeed to cast a stumbling-block in their way, to elevate these factors in His mission to an absolute position amongst the evidences of His Divinity, which He at least never assigned to them. It is a vain effort to seek to eliminate the supernatural from the Life of Jesus, to reduce to a minimum the essentials of the Christian Faith. Let us rather lay its foundations deep in the great facts of the Spiritual order, where Christ Himself would have us base them. If the Son of God can surrender omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, without destroying His personal identity, being indeed very God, then the central essence of the Deity, is neither infinite wisdom nor infinite power, but perfect love and perfect goodness. And so from the very lowest valley of humiliation, we catch clear sight of the loftiest summit of theology, the serene and shining truth, that in His essential being, God is Love.

VI

THE RESURRECTION FACT

"The Lord rose from the grave; and those who had known Him before, knew that He was the same and yet changed. This is the sum of the Apostles' testimony, the new gospel of the world." WESTCOTT.

A STUDY of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, brings with it the conviction that here pre-eminently criticism, orthodox and unorthodox, is originated and influenced by preconceptions and presuppositions, favourable or unfavourable to the faith. We may deprecate the fact, but nevertheless it abides as a factor which must be reckoned with, that the interpretation which we place upon evidence is very largely determined by the existence of theories which pre-occupy the mental vision. Dr Schmiedel in his discussion of the resurrection, puts on one side all such general assertions as, that miracles are impossible, for such propositions rest upon a particular theory of the universe, not upon an examination of the facts themselves. It is simply beyond our power, as the ablest modern thought assures us, to approach the contemplation of anything with a perfectly empty mind. A man without presuppositions is as much an abstraction as a man without character. That Harnack and Westcott—men of profound learning and deep piety—should from the same historical evidence, reach such different conclusions on this subject, is to be

accounted for by the presuppositions with which they view it. If the essence of Christianity were only the proclamation of the Fatherhood of God by the fairest of human personalities, there is no necessity for a resurrection, but this is not the complete faith of the Christian Church ; it is the outcome of a presupposition as to the nature and person of Christ.

What Newman says of Christianity in general is, in regard to its evidences and contents, essentially true of the resurrection. " 'He is not here, He is risen,' are words which convey the Easter message to minds in the normal condition of human nature. The message is real, as we ourselves are real." The resurrection is the objective response to our subjective needs. If it be a divine act, then it must be seen within the precincts of the Christian Church, and not from outside it. " It is no bare fact ; it cannot be separated from what it means and what it is. It is full of meanings, meanings which interpret and illuminate, and receive again illuminating interpretation from every deeper craving and experience of man." [1]

While our desire for immortality is obviously no proof for the reality of the fact, on the other hand, may not its absence be a witness that we

[1] Moberly, p. 21.

are so completely enclosed within the limits of the senses, as not to feel its need? Further, when we declare that a thing is "Too good to be true," we actually are calling attention to an opposite result of "The wish to believe"; when, as in the case of St Thomas, this wish itself may place restraint upon belief. In the full appreciation of the evidences for the resurrection of Jesus Christ there are elements involved deeper than the merely historical ones; considerations which go to the root of our spiritual consciousness. It is vain to protest against them. The evidence which neglects them, however conscientiously marshalled, will still be but part of the whole.

The words of reproof addressed to Thomas by His Master after the resurrection, must have been words just, and deserved by him, as by the other apostles. It was the resurrection of Jesus, it is needful to bear in mind, not the immortality of the soul, that Thomas doubted, as Loisy remarks in criticism of Harnack's position. This latter truth the Apostle held, however perfunctorily, together with the rest of his fellow-countrymen.

Jesus surely means that those three years of discipleship *ought* to have given them some insight into His spiritual nature; into the reality of that spiritual order in which, though incarnate,

He ever moved. The Easter faith *ought* not to be wanting in those who shared His spirit, till confirmed by the Easter message. " Blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed."

Christ's benediction is the appreciation of character; of that heart-purity, that spiritual affinity, to which alone is granted, to which alone is possible, the Vision of God. To all such the conception must appear monstrous, irrational, that the physical change, which we term death, should have power to mar or hold in bondage that personality whose essence is oneness with the divine. That indeed would be to contradict all their preconceptions; the infinite overcome of the finite! the temporal claiming sway over the eternal!

We do not therefore primarily approach the resurrection of Jesus, that being assured of its reality, we may then go on to believe that indeed He was divine. Not in this order; not for such purpose was this revelation historically given. Indeed it was not a miracle in the ordinary sense, nor was it open to the ordinary external and historical tests. " A man will not be able to accept this most mysterious of all supernatural manifestations, if he has not first been led up, as the disciples were, to find the supernatural in the life and person of Jesus; the impression of His moral supremacy and that unshared relation to

the Father, to which His inmost consciousness testified."[1] Let us not argue that Christ rose from the dead and that therefore Christianity is true, but rather because Christianity is true, therefore His resurrection is credible. To demand demonstrative certainty of a miraculous occurrence, which happened wellnigh two thousand years ago, before we shall feel justified in believing in the truth of Christianity, is almost a denial of the possibility of being a Christian at all.

The line of thought which we have been pursuing may help us, as we approach the historical evidence for the resurrection, where we are face to face with the initial difficulty,[2] that with the exception of St Paul, all to whom the risen Lord manifested Himself, were those who had followed Him while living and loved Him when dead. Even Saul the persecutor may have been subconsciously greatly influenced through the witness borne to Jesus by those whom he scourged and imprisoned. How poorly indeed did the evangelists make up their case for strictly legal proof, if thus, conscious of a fraud, they attempted by fabricating evidence to impose upon future generations! If we ask for the witness of one of Christ's opponents, of a Pontius Pilate, or member of the Sanhedrim, or perchance

[1] Forrest, p. 157. [2] Origen, Strauss.

even some foreign merchant whom commerce might have brought to the Holy City, unbiassed by the hot, passionate strife of Jewish partisanship, we ask in vain. For such we must have recourse to the Apocryphal Gospels. This fact was recognised and even appealed to without any effort at concealment. "He showed Himself alive after His Passion, by many infallible proofs, not to all the people, but to us . . . chosen witnesses." St Peter here evidently feels no need of evasion or explanation. Indeed, throughout the whole narrative there is no trace of any attempt to shape the extraordinary events to any preconceived theory. The apostles may have been incompetent to interpret the facts confronting them, yet at least they possessed the invaluable faculty of honestly describing what they saw.

To our limited human reason it seems certain that God could have compelled all Jerusalem to see and know that Jesus was risen from the dead. That He did not do so, must be considered as a fact essentially connected with the nature of the resurrection itself; on the same plane with that other evident fact, that the Christian faith, with all its varied appeal, is never forced upon the acceptance of mankind. Through the divine acts is the divine purpose made manifest. We have absolutely no reason to suppose that, either

for ourselves evidentially, or for the men of that far-off time spiritually, the result would have been other than it was, had Jesus manifested Himself after His resurrection unreservedly to all. For aught we know to the contrary,—nay with much to substantiate the belief—it may have been as impossible for the Jewish priests to recognise the risen Christ, as for blind men to see the sun. It is a deep truth of the spiritual order that,

> "You must love Him e'er to you
> He can seem worthy of your love."

The truth is, we cannot even imagine such a demonstration of the fact of the resurrection as would be beyond the power of criticism to challenge. Had Pilate seen Christ and remained unconvinced, it might be urged that it was merely an apparition, and the moment this passed beyond the charmed circle of disciples, it failed to produce conviction. On the other hand had Pilate seen and been convinced, the objection would be raised that the testimony of a man who was capable of being shaken by his wife's dreams, is of little value in determining an objective fact. Moral affinities with the Son of God declared themselves in the days of His ministry. Then as now for men to enter into effective contact with the spiritual world, requires special and spiritual receptivity. It is upon the pure in heart

that the benediction falls. " They shall see God."

" How pure in heart and sound in head,
With what divine affections bold,
Should be the man whose thoughts would hold,
An hour's communion with the dead ! "

If the question be asked—why should the Church preach the resurrection to all men indiscriminately as a part of the Christian faith, if the appearances of the risen Christ were only granted to those who possessed this faculty of spiritual vision, as alone capable of receiving them ? the answer must cause reflection as to the proper position of the doctrine itself in Christian teaching. Effectively, let us confess, it never can be preached, and received, unless there exist first the discipline of intercourse with Jesus which the apostles underwent. In this way alone can be produced the same fitness for seeing in the risen Christ alike the crown and the interpretation of His previous life on earth.

In regard to the Christian religion in general, Pfleiderer argues : that what alone is established fact, is the early belief in Christ, to which the New Testament and contemporary Christian literature bear witness. So Martineau declares that these appearances of Jesus are simply evidence for psychological facts in the consciousness of others, which attest alone the intense power of His spirit over the springs of veneration

and trust in them. But I can judge of the truth of the disciples' witness here, regarding that which I have no direct means of perceiving, from its relation to what by experience I do actually know of Jesus. My conviction of His character, says Dr Forrest, of His dominance, His centrality for mankind, drawn from what He was during His ministry, would be turned into an enigma had the crucifixion been the close of all. Nothing but the proof, which the disciples received, both of the transfiguration and the continuity of His earthly life, solve that enigma and restore my inmost experience of Him to harmony.

Bearing in mind that mere historic evidence of a fact which happened long ago cannot of itself compel belief, let us briefly consider what the evangelical witness attests. Before us in the New Testament are two facts. The first Christians undoubtedly believed that their Lord had risen from the dead, and upon their belief the Church was founded. The matter at issue is to account for the origin of this belief. Here again, if a natural explanation can be found, which suits and embraces all the facts of the case, this we undoubtedly must accept in preference to a supernatural.

The Christian faith, set forth in the creeds of the Church, gathered from the Gospel narratives, corresponding to the instincts and needs of

humanity, is not a philosophical belief in the immortality of the soul, nor the return of a dead man to the conditions of earthly life.

"The resurrection of Christ was the revelation of a new life, in which all that belonged to His humanity was preserved, and at the same time, all was transfigured." [1] It is this conception which emerges from the accounts of the witnesses, striving to render into intelligible language the conviction impressed upon them by their risen Master. Here let us remember, they possessed no analogies to guide them, familiar though they were, as we see in the words of Martha, with the thought of a far-off resurrection-day, or of a human life temporarily resumed, as in the case of Lazarus.

The apparently inconsistent descriptions of the risen body of Jesus, record the impression produced by a manifestation beyond either experience or understanding.

There are no traces of an attempt being made to collate evidence, as though to satisfy the requirements of a judicial investigation. "Different traditions must have circulated in different quarters, and specimens of these traditions have come down to us without being digested into accordance with a single type. No difficulty of weaving the separate incidents into an orderly,

[1] Westcott, p. 286.

well-compacted narrative can impugn the unanimous belief of the Church which lies behind them. This universal belief is the root fact which has to be accounted for." [1]

The self-same pages record Christ's frequent endeavours to prepare His disciples for His resurrection, and their obtuseness and blindness to predictions which His enemies did not fail to note. Side by side we read the accounts of the faint-hearted and remote allusion of disciples to " The third day since these things were done," with the active preparations of the Jewish rulers in guarding His tomb for this very period. So unprepared are they for Christ's resurrection, that they gaze into His open sepulchre with unintelligent eyes. The descriptions which they give of their risen Master are the modern critics' despair. No analogies from the Pagan or Jewish world are their guides here. Obviously, they are far from attempting to bolster up some " plan of operation " unanimously adopted, for they have depicted a situation which, neither purely material nor purely spiritual, is unique. At the very moment when, as they tell us, He offered an apparently material test of His reality, He showed that He was no longer bound by the laws of matter.

From the narratives of the resurrection, it is

[1] Sanday.

impossible to doubt that the disciples believed their Master to be again alive, and yet under new and glorious conditions of life hitherto unrealised. For such a conception they had absolutely no precedent, as they had none for the character of Christ which they pourtray. To speak of it as a "ruling idea" of their time, is, as Westcott remarks, simply to misrepresent facts. It was to them a conception most difficult and strange. So strange, so incomprehensible, that Christendom ever since, has swayed, at one time to a physical, again to a spiritual belief as to the nature of the risen body of its Lord. Familiar phrases in popular theology to-day show how hard and narrow ideas of a carnal resurrection tend to overthrow the comprehensive though mysterious teaching of the New Testament.

Some modern theories assure us, in direct contradiction to the narratives themselves, that everything was in confusion at the burial of Jesus, so that no one knew exactly in which sepulchre His body was placed on the evening of Good Friday. Thus, they assert, the very natural mistake of one burial-place for another, led to the erroneous belief that His tomb was empty on the third day. The bulk of sober criticism, however, accepts the statement of the evangelists as to the interment in the cave-like

sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, though with much ingenuity some strive to explain away the Easter message of the empty tomb. There is very general agreement as to the truth of the record that " In the early morning of the first day of the week following the crucifixion, the tomb of Jesus was found empty."

The emptiness of the tomb does not of course, in itself, necessitate a resurrection. The belief commonly held by the Jews was, as St Matthew informs us, that the disciples of Jesus came by night and stole the body away; which is obviously based upon the admission that the body of Jesus was no longer there. Such an action, however, is inconceivable on the part of men who had only to wait for the stated period, when the corpse would, according to Roman custom, be handed over to the relatives; and who, moreover, demonstrated, by coming to embalm a dead body, that they had no expectation of a resurrection, and no predisposition towards the invention of such a story.

The suggestion made by Rèville to account for the empty tomb is the most plausible which Radical criticism has to offer, and yet is put out of court by its inherent improbabilities. The Sanhedrim, he says, affronted by the thought that the Crucified should receive honourable

burial, and also fearing lest the grave should become a place of pilgrimage for His Galilean followers, bribed the Roman soldiers to remove the body of Jesus, and hold their tongues. Such an explanation is sufficiently refuted by the question: Why did not the Jewish leaders produce this decisive evidence against the Apostolic preaching of the resurrection, which, before two months had elapsed, began in the very city where the Sanhedrim was all-powerful, and the followers of the Nazarene a despised and insignificant minority?

Accepting as historical the statement that the tomb of Jesus was empty on the third day, those who are compelled by all the evidence before them on this mysterious matter to conceive of the Risen-Body as rather psychical than physical, can only venture to theorise in any attempt to *explain* such a change from one mode of existence into another. To say that the physical body of Jesus became dematerialised is, of course, not an explanation but only a vain "throwing out of words" at things. No explanation can satisfy all the difficulties which the narratives present.

While, however, the fact of the empty tomb is shown by accumulative evidence to be one of the primitive elements in the resurrection story, it is equally certain from the narratives that this was not the cause of the disciples' faith. Not at the sight

of the tenantless sepulchre but at the self-manifestation of the risen Lord had the Easter faith its birth. The surest evidences of the resurrection of Christ are to be found, as Athanasius teaches, chiefly in the reality of the life of His Church. The light which is diffused, where before there was darkness, is evidence that Christ still lives. In the power which effects the conversion of the heathen, in the influences which transform the life, in these and results like these, lies the witness that He is not dead, that He is risen from the grave. Apart from this," Natural proofs of supernatural facts must be inadequate and inconclusive."[1]

Jesus said, standing yet in the fulness of life on this side of death, " I am the Resurrection and the Life," " He that heareth my words hath eternal life, hath passed out of death into life." A far-off, historical fact cannot be verified, but this practical verification of the truth of Christianity which He offers, is always going on in innumerable souls, and those who have experienced within them this new life, find in it the surest proof of the resurrection of the Lord. The Eternal Life which was with the Father and manifested the Father to us, could not possibly be holden in the grasp of death. The nature of man is in touch with two streams of life. " The

summit of his nature is nearer to God than it is to the physical world. His lower or outward nature vainly seeks life for the whole man from the outward world; his higher or inward nature needs that larger and more direct communication which is revealed in the Christ, who said, "The water that I shall give Him shall be within, springing up into Everlasting Life."[1]

The one unnatural thing about the life and work of Christ on earth was the interruption of that life by death. His life and works were natural, on that high plane of naturalness which is above the disturbance of evil, or any interference between God and the perfect fulfilment of His will. Only there is perfect nature found. If the suffering of death, symbol and result of separation from God, was found in Him, it could not be because death claimed Him for its prey, but because He chose to endure it for its ultimate destruction. His resurrection was the resumption of the rudely broken order of His Life and the manifestation in His own person of that sovereignty over death, which He had exhibited in healing disease and turning back death in others. "Without His resurrection, the life and death of Christ are only enigmatical: and Christian Faith, as St Paul has it, were then a hopeless vanity."[1]

[1] Stewart, p. 120. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

VII

THE RESURRECTION FORM

" He was manifested in another form to two of them as they walked."—St Mark.

" Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." —St Luke.

A VAST amount of criticism has been expended upon the question—What was the nature of the risen body of Our Lord? From the very circumstances of the case, no complete and satisfying answer is to be expected. We are here moving in a region which is absolutely unfamiliar and which transcends human experience. It must be frankly confessed that the difficulties introduced by the effort to contemplate the circumstances of anything approaching physical resuscitation are very great. The more naturally we can regard the human side of Christ and everything connected with His body, both before and after death, the better and the more hopeful it is for us His brethren. We must avoid building too much on such expressions as that of St Peter —"His body saw no corruption." They are, it might be argued, but reminiscences of Old Testament thought, and the natural statement of belief on the part of those who beheld their risen Master standing in the fulness of life, unharmed by death.

We have the evidence of St Paul, to whom was granted a real but spiritual manifestation

of Jesus after His resurrection, which supplements the accounts given in the Gospels of appearances apparently partly spiritual, partly physical. Can both be true? A study of the complete evidence leads us to believe primarily that Jesus did really and objectively appear to His disciples. This is the underlying and essential truth in the accounts of the resurrection. We have in it the assurance and the confirmation of human destiny after death. Personality continues, though the incident of death deprives the spiritual self of that material mode of manifestation which was suitable to its material environment.

Here is the heart of the creed. Jesus rose from the dead. That the identical material body which He used for thirty-three years must, as constitutionally necessary to the completeness of His risen life, be resuscitated; for this there appears no adequate reason, and such a belief is surrounded by the gravest difficulties for us, which could not have been present to men of the first century.

Mr Sparrow Simpson has marshalled the evidence for the commonly accepted view most reasonably and completely in his recent work, "Our Lord's Resurrection." His contention depends upon the facts of the empty tomb; of the (apparently) physical manifestations granted

to disciples; and in addition, upon the difficulty of understanding psychologically, how a spiritual manifestation by itself could have convinced men in their state *evidentially*, and moreover assured them of that authority which they certainly believed their risen Master to have conferred upon them. Most heartily do we concur that a belief which has had such incalculably momentous consequences, must have had an adequate cause. No mere hallucination of the senses ever yet moved the world. No "internal influence of Christ upon the mind," which the advocates of the vision theory of the resurrection maintain, could be set forth, if words mean anything, as in the evangelical accounts. Normally, the Christ stood and stands in no relation to human senses, the conditions of our "space and time" life. Occasionally, for reasons vital to human welfare—as witness the Incarnation—He took upon Him such relationships. We see in the post-resurrection appearances of Christ, a control of His body which absolutely transcends ordinary human physical life. Irrespective of the particular particles of matter which He used for His embodiment at any particular moment, He was the same Christ, His body was the same body, because it was the outward expression of His

spirit. And to this do we not find an analogy in our own bodies, whose identity is not affected by the fact that their constituent elements are changing continually?

In our perplexity this at least is certain, that the answer which ignores either of the factors in this mysterious problem is no answer at all. Here again belief in the fact of the resurrection of Jesus far transcends in value for us, the understanding of the method. Prof. Sanday judiciously sums up this much controverted discussion; "It is better to keep substantially the form which a sound tradition has handed down to us, even though its contents, in some degree, pass our comprehension." If by the term "better," more expedient be meant, his conclusion may be accepted, inasmuch as possibly thus for the popular mind the central truth of the resurrection may be the better preserved. But it is necessary to accentuate the fact that those who do not consider that Christianity is committed to any theory of a physical resurrection, nevertheless steadfastly affirm the *objectivity* of the appearances of the risen Lord. Such, they maintain, were not the creation of the disciples' imagination, but were independent of them and had their origin from without, not from within. The narratives, it is said, undoubtedly leave upon us

the impression that Jesus made and unmade His risen body, assuming it and dispersing it at His will. As a theory, this is perfectly legitimate, but do the narratives, critically examined, really lend it their support? The walk to Emmaus and the meal there, and subsequently in the upper room and on the sea-shore; the entry through closed doors, and appearances to disciples which at first were apparently unrecognisable—can these after this manner be best explained?

"Only in St Luke xxiv. 41-3, is it said that the risen Lord ate, and the statement is absent from St John's parallel narrative (xx. 19-25). It belongs to the Synoptic cycle of unhistoric tradition, and is obviously a faint echo of St John xxi, 5, 9, 13."[1] It is remarkable that alike in St Luke's narrative of the supper at Emmaus and in St John's narrative of the breakfast on the lake-shore, it is plainly implied that, while He gave food to His disciples, Jesus Himself took none. Again: Ignatius quotes the saying in St Luke xxiv. 39—which is wanting in St John—though in a less gross form: "Grasp, handle Me and see that I am not a bodiless demon"; and Jerome says that Ignatius quoted it from the apocryphal *Gospel of the Hebrews*. This reveals its nature. It is simply one of the unhistorical

[1] Smith, p. xi.

traditions which floated about the primitive Church. It may be that St Paul had heard this tradition which represents the risen Lord as saying, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold Me having," and had it in view when he wrote "This I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

A comparison of the parallel narratives of the walk to Emmaus in St Mark and St Luke, may possibly enable us to obtain a more reasonable conception of the method of Our Lord's post-resurrection appearances, than that which assumes that He "made and unmade His resurrection-body, taking it and dispersing it at His will." St Mark states that Jesus appeared to the two disciples, "in another form"; St Luke, that "their eyes were holden." Shall we not simply believe that the body of the risen Jesus was a spiritual body, and that only to such as have granted to them the gift of spiritual vision, whose "eyes are not holden" is it possible for Him to appear? Since that far-off day His manifestations may have ceased, but His presence He has never withdrawn all down the centuries. St Paul affirms that Christ appeared to him, and he places his own evidence for the continued personal existence of Jesus on the same plane

as the manifestations given to the other apostles. In St Paul's case, it is to be observed, as in the other instances recorded in the Gospels, it was apparently the purpose of Jesus that when He did manifest Himself, He should at the same time offer some token which revealed Him and assured them that it was indeed Himself. To Mary He uttered the old familiar name; to the two at Emmaus He offered the bread which He had blessed in the old familiar way; to those ten in Jerusalem He showed His wounds; to the seventy repeated the wonder of the draught of fishes; to St Paul He gave the express declaration, "I am Jesus whom thou art persecuting." If it be urged that even here, for the performance of the functions of sight and touch, and voice, a physical body must be assumed, as distinguished from a spiritual body, the only answer is that to our limited comprehension it must be a choice of mysteries. Is it not all a part of the outward and visible sign in the whole sacrament of redemption? St Paul's letters are the earliest evidence to that birth-hour of Christianity, and his Gospel was, above all, a Gospel of the resurrection, the knowledge of which he assumes as universal amongst Christians. Paul preached a risen Christ and he believed Christ risen because he had personally known Him, and experienced His

transforming power. He gives no hint that his experience was different from that of his brethren. There is absolutely no proof, says Weizsäcker, that Paul presupposed a physical Christophany in the case of the older apostles. Had He done so, he could not have placed his own experience on a level with theirs. They cannot, therefore, be said to be without some justification, who from this urge that the risen body of Jesus was of a spiritual not a material nature; that the resurrection was the psychic not the physical manifestation of the departed Lord.

Sir Oliver Lodge sums up this position, "If the historical evidence is strong and definite for the disappeareance, not of bodies in general, but of that one Body from its tomb—the exception being justified on the ground of its having been inhabited by an exceptionally mighty spirit —I am not one to seek to deny it on scientific grounds. But I submit that for the purposes of religion at the present day, no exceptional treatment of the discarded human body is necessary." Here, however, there is no attempt to meet the historical difficulty of the empty tomb.

There would seem in this discussion as to the risen body of Jesus, to be a certain confusion of thought in identifying the terms real and physical (or material). It is certain that we can

form no idea of life apart from embodiment, either here or hereafter; but it is not necessary to confine this to the crude forms of matter with which we are most familiar. If the risen body of Jesus has relationship—as it surely has—to the bodies which shall be the expression of human lives after the discarding of these mortal frames, then amid all the mystery which now for us of necessity surrounds it, we catch glimpses of the underlying truth. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Our gross thoughts of matter must purify themselves—a process indeed which in science has already taken place—as in the manifestations of Christ after His resurrection there is revealed to us how God shall give to the human spirit the key to matter's fundamental laws, and to the inscrutable mysteries of life. Flesh and blood, bone and sinew, are incidents of Evolution. Through them we touch, and have deeper kindred than sometimes we are aware of, with lower forms of life. "They are the means remanent in the completed physical man, the roots of the upward working life which shall have attained its summit." [1] Our resurrection body shall be the instrument; may it not also be the immediate product of the perfected human spirit?

[1] Stewart, p. 125.

The Christian Church recites as her creed "The third day He rose again from the dead," "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Such a resurrection she holds to be "The appropriate climax to the whole of Christ's previous attitude towards matter; the final manifestation of His personal triumph over the totality of sin, and thus the earnest of His power to restore man's entire personality to ultimate order."[1] These phrases we assuredly can in all sincerity affirm, without committing ourselves to the physics or metaphysics of an earlier age.

Accepting as a fact the New Testament statement that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, a question of paramount importance arises. Was His resurrection a revelation of the life of humanity after death, or are its meanings primarily to be applied to Him alone, and only derivatively to mankind? Was Christ's resurrection illuminative or creative?

If the former, it is of universal human significance and contains a revelation of the spiritual world and each individual's connection with it. So we shall not be surprised at but rather welcome the adumbrations and anticipations of this august and transcendent fact in human history, which with Pfleiderer, we trace in the

[1] Illingworth, p. 100.

religions of the Pagan world. God has never left Himself without witness. Eternal truth is enshrined in the mysteries of the Egyptian Osiris, the Greek Demeter, the Phrygian Mithra.

"The *Leit-motif* of the Christian Drama of Redemption 'Through death to life' is in some form foreshadowed in the myths and ceremonies of many religions, and by this very fact it is declared to be one of those elementary truths which were not expressed for the first time in the Christian religion, though they were there revealed in their purest, because ethical and spiritual form."[1] Christ the Christian Lord was indeed *Christus Consummator*. As we seek to isolate Him from the long, chequered human story, His own divine words forbid: "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil."

The truest Christian theology admits the appropriation of the fruits of the general religious process of humanity, gathered together in the religious syncretism of the Roman Empire, of which fruits Judaism contributed but a part. —albeit a principal part. It sees in the totality of all the genuine religious utterances of mankind, "The ever-inadequate expression of That which seeks to reveal Itself to the human spirit as far as the limited receptivity of that spirit will permit."[2]

[1] Pfleiderer, p. 158. [2] Tyrrell.

If, however, resurrection be a fact primarily issuing from and mediated through the divine mysterious nature of Jesus, then the relations of His resurrection to mankind, however ultimately beneficent and far-reaching, are secondary and derived. So personal immortality would be a gift bestowed upon those who are " In Christ," are organically connected with and realise their union with Him. So He brings to bear upon humanity a new external force, a " Power of the Resurrection " potentially indeed efficacious for all, but in actuality raising into eternal personal life only those who had conscious faith in Him.

The water-shed between the Greek and Latin theology lies in this, that the former held to the organic unity of mankind in Christ : the latter recognised the principle of solidarity in Adam. To the Greeks the Incarnation revealed the inmost nature of God, as written in the nature of man. By it God not only reveals Himself to man, but also makes known to man his true nature and constitution. So the Christ can in sincerity bid men " Follow Me."

By the Latins the Incarnation was regarded as an after-thought—not an eternal fact—as the remedy for a catastrophe by which man had been cut off from sonship with God. For the living presence of the Spiritual Christ in the

soul, the Latins substituted an inanimate thing, grace. Greek theology is built fundamentally upon the immanence, Latin upon the transcendence of God.

According to Christian doctrine it was the introduction of moral evil which converted the natural human liability to death into necessity of death. But Christ was morally perfect and therefore under no necessity to die. He might have passed into the larger world,

> "Beyond the smoke and strife
> Of this dim spot which men call earth."

without any experience of physical death. Had the Incarnation taken place in a sinless environment, we may legitimately suppose that the life of Christ would have terminated with such an event as the Transfiguration. Might it not also have been so with our first ancestors, had they kept true to the Holy Will, and so advanced along the line of sinless development? Jesus founds His unique relationship to death, on the uniqueness of His moral nature. "I have power to lay down my life; I have power to take it again." In that voluntary surrender of a life which need not die, in that descent into the Valley of the Shadow by Christ the Representative Man, an act of reparation, of redemption is

made. He wills not to accept the painless transition which would be the normal experience of such a sinless character. He has redemptive work to do: the mysterious depths of which no human plummet can fathom. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." That which was in a measure seen before Christ's death in His power over the physical world for His purposes of redemption, is now perfect and manifest. The antagonism between the material and the spiritual is entirely done away.

So Christ "brought Immortality to light." In His resurrection was fulfilled the vague instincts, the dim longings, which had found expression in the highest literature of the Pagan as of the Jewish world. In a higher sense than Jew or Pagan had ever dreamed, He demonstrated that God was not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto Him.

But the revelation of the first Easter Day did more than lift the vague aspiration after immortality into the full truth of personal resurrection into eternal life. The risen Christ was more than the revealer of the unseen purposes of God for mankind. Eternal life consists not in length of days stretching out even to infinity. It is quality, not quantity of living. "This is eternal life, to know Thee, O God." How shall man

attain to unity with God from Whom by his own acts he has separated Himself? Through no absolute determinism, through his own volition, man has sinned against his Heavenly Father. He has not been true to God's purposes, which perhaps alone in creation he has frustrated. To have gratified the desires of his animal nature, that would have been natural, though non-moral; but the essence of sin is, that it exhibits the features of a lower stage of life than that on which it occurs. Sin means retrogression where God intended evolution. In the life and death of Christ was the assurance of the divine forgiveness —even God suffering for and with man. By the cross was made manifest God's eternal opposition to sin. There man sees the black issue of it all: its unnatural horror, its destruction of the divine ideal, as he there learns that the Redemption of man means in a very real sense the passion of God.

> "So through the thunder comes a human voice
> Saying 'O heart I made, a heart beats here,
> Face My hands fashioned, see it in Myself;
> Thou hast no power, nor may conceive of Mine.
> But love I gave thee, with Myself to love;
> And thou must love Me who have died for thee.'"

Recent criticism has denied the necessity for any visible ascension of Our Lord, and what we have already said as to the constitutional neces-

sity — apart from evidential reasons — of a material manifestation of the risen Christ cognisable by the senses, is also applicable here.

A physical going-upwards—such as is described by the evangelists—is certainly not the only conceivable manner of His departure from the precincts of the visible. But, as in the case of the appearances after the resurrection, we can see the suitability of the ascension both to the first disciples and ourselves. It suggests the perfect translation of human nature into an unearthly state. May we not legitimately conceive the manifestations granted to the spiritual vision of the disciples during the Forty Days, for wise purposes to have grown more and more infrequent; and that the last was marked in this special and distinctive manner, to convey the needful lesson, that this stage of the Christophany was ended: that henceforth they, as all men, must walk by faith not sight?

So far from being a legendary expression of belief in the exaltation of Christ—the prior belief giving birth to the story—the exact opposite is the case. The visible ascension created belief in His exaltation. As regards ourselves, it has been well said that if there are some amongst us able to retain the idea, while dispensing with the symbol, as also in the case of the resurrection,

it must be admitted that such have only reached this standpoint as the outcome of the long development wrought through belief in the historical reality of the symbol.

"It came to pass as He blessed them, He parted from them and was taken up into Heaven." It is surely idle to scoff at what is designated as the crude materialism of the language of the evangelist. We know that the concepts of space and time are but modes of human thought, peculiar to this order in which we now live, with no necessary counterparts in the eternal life of God. But for us meanwhile they must form the condition of all our thinking. For a little space, as men number earthly years, God was manifest in the flesh; so in the unchanging Godhead, from all eternity, must have existed the human likeness of God, waiting through the long, slow centuries of man's upward evolution, till the fulness of time had come and the divine purpose was complete.

> "Thou madest man, he knows not why;
> He thinks he was not made to die;
> And Thou hast made him. Thou art just."

Watch humanity starting forth in its new career from *Anno Domini*, with fresh hope at its heart, fresh life-blood in its withered veins, and the proof is manifold that Christ has not

lived and died in vain. We are in a redeemed world. Not in narrow sections, but along the broad levels of succeeding generations, yet not without backset and relapse, see the spirit of the ever-present Christ uplifting the standards, purifying the thoughts, cleansing the ways of humanity. Everywhere, and never more surely than to-day, from out the smoke and tumult of unfaith and disaster and revolution, His banners are pressing forward, not heavy with "foul tissue of terrestrial gold" but emblazoned with the benediction of God. Our highest thoughts, our noblest instincts, our most far-reaching aspirations, could we but believe it, are the truest, and such the Christ—*Salvator Mundi*—never shall belie.

VIII

THE MEANING OF THE DEATH

" There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified
Who died to save us all.

" We do not know, we cannot tell
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there."

ALEXANDER.

THE story of the passion of Jesus, told with such simplicity by the evangelists, is not a theology, but it is something better. Here we find no theory of an atonement, nor even, as might have been expected, the indignant recital of foul wrong done to the innocent. The tragedy of the cross, set forth in severely simple terms, without sentiment or reflection is, even in the fourth Gospel, left to speak for itself. That it occupied a central position in the minds of the first Christians, is sufficiently attested by the careful and circumstantial character of the narratives which, as we now read them, tell of a conflict between the sin of the world and the patient love of God, and victory lying with the vanquished. When by subsequent writers too exclusive emphasis has been laid upon the death of Jesus as the means of redemption; when the cross has been taken as the solitary symbol of the whole life of self-sacrificing love, rather than its consummation and final proof, so all too often has been obscured the full glory and brightness of Jesus' doctrine of God. "Nothing can be more fatal, or more contrary to the spirit of the New Testament, than

to ascribe this virtue to it as an isolated event, and to assign to His ministry a merely preparatory and subordinate place. It is no more true to say that He came into the world to *die*, than that He came into the world to *live*. The former statement is destitute of spiritual meaning, unless read in the full light of what is involved in the latter."[1]

At the outset of a study of the death of Jesus, it is essential to emphasise the fact of its necessity for Him, being such as He was; its unavoidableness. The author of that most interesting book —giving us the Jewish view of Jesus—"As Others saw Him," persistently dwells upon the point that Jesus literally threw away His life, and by refusing to make Himself clearly understood, practically compelled the Jewish authorities to have Him put to death. "O Jesus, why didst Thou not show Thyself to Thy people in Thy true character? Why didst Thou seem to care not for aught that we at Jerusalem cared for? Why, arraigned before the appointed judges of Thy people, didst Thou keep silence before us, and by thus keeping silent, share in pronouncing judgment upon Thyself?"[2] "Why did Jesus not make His purpose clearer?" is the burden of these pages; and undoubtedly

[1] Forrest, p. 240. [2] "As Others saw Him," p. 214.

there have been theologies, passing for Christian, which seem to offer justification for such an entirely misleading conception as this of the spirit of Jesus. Those who approach His life, with preconceptions shaped and coloured by some "scheme of atonement," inevitably lose the realism, the humanness, the naturalness of betrayal, accusation, condemnation, crucifixion. To imagine that Jesus had to die on Calvary, according to the fore-ordained purpose of God; that therefore, lest this appointed end be thwarted, He speaks and acts enigmatically, as it were giving to the Roman Pilate, to the religious leaders of the Jews, to the people themselves, no fair opportunity of recognising His claims, actually of set purpose compelling them to crucify Him, is a conception, which monstrous though it be, is too frequently held with complacency. The whole sublime story is robbed of moral content if victim and accusers alike are conceived of as automata, acting under the grasp of an inexorable necessity. The misinterpretation of such phrases as "God hardened Pharaoh's heart"; "That seeing they may see and not perceive; hearing they may hear and not understand," possibly offers a partial explanation, but the root lies deeper, in a fatal disassociation of religion from life; in a mental

indolence, which hiding itself beneath the disingenuous plea of faith, refuses to serve God "with the mind." Jesus moves to His death, not as some unreal actor in a tragedy; not as the passive victim of arbitrary decree; but in accordance with the order—indeed a broken, pitiable order—of the world which He was to save. His death came to Him, as Ritschl puts it, in the fulfilment of His vocation; it befell Him in His conflict with the world's evil. Even though the price be His life, He will not deny Himself; He will not prove untrue to the principles by which He had lived. To sacrifice His ideal rather than Himself was a treachery from which His soul shrank with horror and loathing. The only sacrifice He declined to make was the sacrifice of the truth.

We must remember that this world's tragedy —as after generations learned it to be—was wrought out on a very insignificant stage; that very petty passions, very paltry ambitions were its accomplices. As viewed from the outside, as we should so view a similar event in India to-day, it was the death of a Jewish Rabbi who insisted upon a spiritual and inward reformation amongst a people with a passion for religionism, a people wedded to a fanatical conservatism and arrogant self-conceit. The forces working in

such a society are wont to come to a head in its leaders. To them the character, the claims, the influence of Jesus were a constant reproach; to their authority a dangerous menace. In the East the life of the individual is never of much account. It is an easy matter to hale Jesus before their ecclesiastical tribunal, and then on a trumped-up charge hand Him over to the secular arm for punishment. From the outside, by some Roman soldier writing home, such meagre account might well have been rendered of an insignificant episode amongst the ever-turbulent Jewish provincials.

With this sordid story of petty spite and self-centred clericalism, of religious fanaticism, cowardly officialism, popular indifferentism, what had imperial Rome to do, or classic Greece, or modern Christendom or the teeming populations of the Pagan world? On that obscure stage—chosen in the order of God's providence—was witnessed the conflict, there as everywhere, of universal forces; good and evil, light and darkness, unselfishness and self-love. Across the centuries we feel the stirring of the same passions; we recognise our kinship in the same selfishness, meanness, jealousy. By fellow-feeling we confess the world's sin. By the common blood beating in our veins, by the solidarity of

mankind, we acknowledge that it was indeed our sin—the familiar sins of to-day—with its inherent opposition to goodness which thus put the good One to open shame, thus crucified the Son of God. As the disciples of Jesus were first drawn to Him by His perfect manhood, by the manifestation of a character which shamed and dwarfed while it attracted, and along the familiar way of human comradeship were led eventually to worship the Divine, so by the *Via Dolorosa* of the world's martyrs, we catch faint glimpses of the meaning of sacrifice, of the mystery hidden in the heart of the suffering of God.

"As we understand how an ultra-rational sanction for the sacrifice of the interests of the individual to those of the social organism has been a feature common to all religions, we see also why the conception of sacrifice has occupied such a central place in nearly all beliefs, and why the tendency of religion has ever been to surround this principle with the most impressive and stupendous of sanctions." [1]

We shrink from the assertion that Jesus was a martyr, as we also hesitate to recognise goodness if not clad in Christian garb; and plain men mistrust or stumble at our strained theology.

[1] Kidd, p. 126.

Our fear is, lest the claim that He was a martyr for conscience' sake, as others, His brethren, before *Anno Domini* and since, be taken to imply that like to them in this, the fulness of the meaning of His death is exhausted on that plane; just as also, if goodness exist outside Christendom, there be no need for Christ at all. Let us rather strive to emphasise God's larger, His more comprehensive unity. Let us seek for the signs of one divine purpose, one divine life manifesting itself in all and through all, as in the darkness the faint glimmering of dawn gives assurance that this self-same sunshine somewhere floods the sky.

All the good there is in the world we may call imperfect Christianity. It is not something essentially different, requiring, so to speak, to be dealt with by God in a wholly different manner. "There is, we believe, but one perfect or normal faith, that which rests on the revelation of Jesus Christ; but faith itself, an attitude of heart and mind, not an intellectual assent to propositions, is present in a more or less rudimentary state in every upward effort and aspiration of men. Such, when ripened, grows into the faith of Jesus Christ; as also it finds its rational justification in the revelation made through Him."[1]

[1] Prof. Hort, pp. 332-337.

So far then in the death of Jesus do we recognise this element, common to the martyrs of every age, devotion to an ideal, which He will not abandon, though the price be life itself. His patient endurance, His heroism, we dare to link on to theirs and in it find at once justification and transfiguring light. From this point of view we must not regard His sufferings as singular or exceptional, at least in kind, but rather as the natural working out of a general law, that he who is loyal to the divine claims in this world of selfishness and discord, must suffer for righteousness' sake. It is along this common path, it is through this ever-open door, that we must pass, if we would enter into the fulness of the meaning of His death, for that He companied with the world's martyrs even to the death is no gospel, but echo rather of the sad music of humanity. What Doctrine of the Cross do we find in the words of Jesus Himself? What does He teach us lay in it apart from, and in addition to the inevitable suffering of the righteous man in conflict with the world's evil? This primarily, this consistently, this with ever-growing insistence, as His Passion drew near, and as—we may say it with all reverence—its mystery grew irradiated with divine light shining more and more clear. His death voluntarily endured was

somehow to be the means of delivering from death the souls of the many. This much and perhaps not much more. It was indeed a truth of the divine order past man's comprehension. Here and there in His words of the last days we can feel how their simplicity, their brevity is drawn out and coloured by the theological ideas which became current in after days, as disciples strove to fill in all that seemed to them to be implicate in those sublime phrases. "The constitutive ideas were His, but the constructive endeavour theirs; with Him all is spontaneous, the expression of an intuitive or immediate consciousness; with them all is reflective, the expression of a mediative consciousness." [1] Yet from the words of Jesus we do not learn how His death brings life to others, or whether this life could be procured for them by other means than this.

Whatever might have been the function of the Incarnation in a sinless world, its purpose in ours was, as Jesus tells us, to save the individual from personal and the race from collective sin. This pre-eminently is the answer to the great question *Cur Deus Homo?* In the Incarnation the atonement has its beginning; the one is involved in the other. The redemption of Christ was the manifestation of that

[1] Fairbairn, p. 373.

which is eternal in the being of God, of the love of God for the world. The atonement is a truth which belongs to the spiritual order. "No shedding of blood—not even that of the Lamb of God—could literally wash away sin. Nor could the physical resurrection of one man, or of many, deprive death of its sting and the grave of its victory. Whether these physical manifestations were *necessary*, it is impossible for us to know; but at the most they can only be *efficacia signa*, not the efficient *causes* of our redemption. It cost more than this to redeem our souls."[1] The faith that brings forgiveness is faith in a living person, and in His life of willing sacrifice seen as a proof of love to God and man.

It is clear from the words of Jesus Himself as recorded in the Gospels, that the giving of His life means more than the act or experience of dying. In the fourth Gospel, He is represented as speaking of Himself, while still living and labouring among men, as the bestower of eternal life, and of a present giving of His life for others. He was even then the Bread of Life. He was already saving men. He could not, therefore, have regarded His prospective death as the sole saving deed. We have a right to consider His own sayings as for us chiefly authoritative in

[1] "Contentio Veritatis," p. 95.

comparison with subsequent interpretations of them, construed in terms of the Jewish sacrificial system. Of all the technical terms common in theological discussions of the death of Christ—atonement, penalty, substitution, satisfaction, expiation—we catch from His lips but one, "ransom," and that is used in the untechnical sense of a means of saving or recovering.

In the death of Jesus there is a twofold revelation, of the nature of God, and of the nature of sin. In it as part of His mission on earth, we see the consummation of that revelation of God which He came to make, which He Himself was. His death can have no meaning which is incongruous with that idea of God which is "according to Christ Jesus." The Incarnation is the externalisation of what was innermost in God; "The secret of the Eternal manifested in time." From it therefore comes on the moral side the complete manifestation of God to man. The "patripassionism" which was condemned as a heresy was in itself the assertion of a profound truth. Its condemnation was the result of a tenacious adherence to the logical result of an abstract definition of God. The necessities of thought indeed demand God as the Absolute, the Unchangeable, the First Cause; the necessities of life are met by the revelation by Jesus

of the Divine Fatherhood. The latter, not the former, is the object of religion. "The very truth that came by Jesus Christ may be summed up in the passibility of God."[1] The humiliation of the Son involved the visible passion and death; but the surrender by the Father involved the sorrow that was the invisible sacrifice. So the cross is Christ's supreme testimony to the deep concern of God for men. It is the very proof and manifestation of God's love, of the Father's righteous character, and of His unutterable mercy, which the sacrifice of Jesus Christ affords to those who would learn from it His Father's nature and name, that helps us to bear the thought of the stern cruelties of Nature without rushing into atheism; and to understand that, as an infinite self-sacrifice has afforded us a clue to the mystery of our manhood, so it may ultimately place in our hands the key to the mysterious sufferings of the sentient creation, and to its no less mysterious joys. The death of Jesus also expresses, what man's whole experience reveals, the radical contrast of sin and holiness. The cross is the witness on the field of human history to the affront done by sin to the holy love of God. There is revealed, in its opposition to good, the true nature of evil, and there it is

[1] Fairbairn, p. 483.

condemned. If the sense of sin be a creation of Christianity, this creative factor was the death of Christ. Thus the purpose of God in it has been achieved, and His judgment against evil has been so expressed, that man is slowly becoming possessed by that judgment, making it his own.

The great work of the spirit of Christ, which He described as that of convicting the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, has been going on ever since and is still going on. "Sins which were once tolerated are now denounced, moral ideals which were once treated as impracticable, are now the common property of the civilised world, and judgments which were once regarded as the private opinions of a few faddists, are now accepted as the deliberate judgments of humanity." [1]

In no department perhaps of theology is its dependence on the current philosophy of the day more apparent than in that which has for its subject-matter sin and atonement. It is by the effort of each age to interpret Christ and Christianity to itself, that the various traditional theories or doctrines of the atonement have been formed. The endeavour has always been to set forth in terms of the current philosophy a

[1] "Faith of a Christian," p. 78.

religious experience, a genuine deliverance believed to have been granted from the domination of evil. In accordance with the thought of their day, the early Christian fathers regarded the death of Christ as a ransom which He paid for sinners to the Evil One. So they endeavoured to bring this august fact into harmony with that conception of the world to which men had so far been enabled to attain ; and this is precisely that which each Christian generation, if it would be honest with itself, will seek to do. Several centuries later a different view of the atonement was thought out by Anselm, to be in accord with Germanic ideas of reparation. In agreement with the prevailing notions of chivalry, Christ, by His act of atoning suffering, was deemed to have rendered due satisfaction to the offended honour of God. Those conceptions of the atonement which have been inherited through Calvinism, and largely colour modern religious thinking, really correspond to, and are the outcome of an environment of the past, the juridical and governmental ideas of Roman jurisprudence and common law.

To thoughtful minds to-day these traditional theories have grown to be distant and unreal. Such methods of thinking are not natural to us ; they oppress us with their weight of the " dead

hand." We must believe, that as to other ages, so to ours, God is discovering conceptions of the supreme facts of the Christian religion which shall command rational consent. To retain cruder forms of statement which have no longer any real hold upon the mind, is merely to alienate the rising generation, and to refuse to the living principle of our faith room within the Church to display itself with all its power. Such former theories have served their purpose. They have kept alive in the hearts of men the sense of separation between man and God, and maintained an age-long protest against all attempts to whittle down the gravity of sin as a fact of spiritual experience. The deeper spirit of Christianity has from the first refused to regard the atonement as an event in time, and has pressed towards a view of it *sub specie æternitatis*. In proportion as we penetrate to the inmost meaning of the death of Christ, we catch in it glimpses of a process essentially spiritual; an assurance coming from the external world of perception and historical fact, that the sense of relief and reconciliation which the surrender of the soul to its highest ideals brings with it, is no illusion, but is bound up with the divine scheme of the world.

There are some to whom sin presents itself as a disease, whose effect is seen in the impaired

moral vision; the "grit in the machine," owing to the presence of which results discord and ineffective work. From this point of view it is alleged that humanity is an object of pity rather than of blame. We are the victims of cosmic forces working from generation to generation, passive sufferers and not active subjects. Heredity accounts for much, environment for more, and between them the sad human story is complete. Man is less a sinner than an invalid. This view of sin is very conspicuously reflected in contemporary literature, and is defended upon evolutionary principles. Undoubtedly it is an outcome, possibly a cause, of the prevailing depreciation of sin itself as a spiritual fact. Yet a judgment about sin which professes to be scientific, must square with experience, and just here the testimony of experience is adverse. We know that sin has an element which is not simply imperfection. Let us freely admit that the arena for the exercise of any voluntary choice may be narrowed, and the difficulties in the way of any moral progress heightened and multiplied by the manifold influences of heredity and environment. Indeed, is it not just this very lesson which biology and sociology are teaching us to-day; helping us to see how *organic* is the mischief which we ourselves do, when we go

wrong? Here the positivist has no gospel for humanity; it is the faith of the Christian that he can, as a rational and free (yet spirit-assisted) agent, stem this torrent of inherited evil. A man may be tempted to throw the whole of his responsibility for his yielding to an impulse of evil, upon his forefathers, as if because they had some responsibilities, he therefore had none. To succeed in such an attempt he must suppress his own conscience, as well as do violence to the teachings of an accurate psychology. Evil may indeed be "good in the making" in the sense that,

> "Men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

Yet whatever be its origin, conscience is now something more than the product of the accumulated fears of an unknown series of ancestors, and the categorical imperative is explicable by no hedonistic casuistry. We have the power of free-will, and are not automata deluding ourselves that we have the prerogative of choice, when we have not. "The self within the self" which judges, praises, blames, is superior to the "wheel of nature," and it is from it there proceed the sense of guilt and the consciousness of sin. All attempts to eliminate from sin the element of choice in the endeavour to remove difficulties in the way of man's salvation, result in making

man not worth the saving, and reduce his nature to the level of the brute. By repentance man's attitude of opposition—the assertion of the self-will—to the mind of God, is changed to one of agreement. In forgiveness God's necessary opposition to the sinner is changed into one of reconciliation. By the death of Christ adequate representation is made of the nature of sin. There indeed is seen its bitter fatal fruit. On the cross it is gibbeted, stripped of all pretence, as God Himself views it, now visible to all the world. As the author of "The Faith of a Christian" points out, opposition may be revealed in either of two ways: by forcible resistance or by passive endurance. Christ refused to have recourse to the former when the forces of evil threatened His life, but none the more did He yield in His opposition to the evil. He suffered, the just at the hands of the unjust, and by suffering He at the same time revealed His uncompromising attitude to their injustice, while He saved them from the consequences which His forcible opposition to their sin would have brought upon them. As His deliverance would have meant their suffering, so His voluntary Passion meant their deliverance. This is the love of God. "He saved others, Himself He could not save." In His essential Being Love, at all

costs to self, at all self-sacrifice, the welfare of others must come first. This is the revelation of the cross :—

> "Would I suffer for Him that I love? So
> Wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
> He who did most, shall bear most; the
> Strongest shall stand the most weak.
> 'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry
> For! my flesh that I seek
> In the Godhead! I seek and I find it.
> A Hand like this hand
> Shall throw open the gates of new life to
> Thee! See the Christ stand."

Not even in the case of true human forgiveness is there but an act of kindly, tolerant good-nature which overlooks another's wrong-doing. Non-moral beings cannot exercise forgiveness. It is a moral action, which neither can ignore nor condone the wrong that has been done. The moral sense is not satisfied unless the reality and depth of the wrong be acknowledged on either side; by sinner as well as by him who is sinned against. Some revelation, on the part of the person forgiving, of the suffering which has been inflicted by the sin against him, is just as necessary to perfect forgiveness, as is confession of that wrong on the part of the person who has committed it.

May we not ascend from this our common human experience of forgiveness to the cross of

Christ, and the necessity for it in the love of God? In the death of Christ, on that awful stage exposed to the whole world's view, God in His very act of forgiving, does not make light of sin, but in the suffering of the sinless One, manifests to the human conscience sin's heinousness, as none but God could do; for man breathing it as his accustomed atmosphere must fail to understand its terrible unnaturalness. If we ask why the representation of the real nature of sin should thus have been public, visible to the world then and afterwards, and not merely to the individual conscience, may we not say that God has relations to the race as well as to the individual? To humanity as a whole, the divine action in forgiveness must be justified, lest there come confusion into man's conception of the moral order. Repenting of his sin, accepting this divine revelation of it, in which God's sense of outraged justice, of wrong, must manifest itself, and so manifesting pass, man becomes reconciled to God. It is indeed true, as we have seen, that the Father of spirits in His own eternal blessedness may not suffer with men, but in Christ God has humbled Himself to our consciousness of sin and death. It is a travesty upon the atonement to imagine that the Father stands aloof and is pro-

pitiated, as the pagans fancied of their gods, by the pains of another. The New Testament never speaks of a propitiation offered to God, because that would convey the false and debasing idea that He had been reluctantly won to mercy. The term itself is one which may easily be abused. It is the divine mercy that is the source of the propitiation, not the propitiation of the mercy. "It does *not* mean that God is persuaded to gracious thoughts towards sinners by the sacrifice which another offers to Him. It does *not* mean that His condemnation of them is removed by simple virtue of that sacrifice and apart from their appropriation of it. It *does* mean that God's condemnation of a sinful race is expressed in the death of Christ, who died and rose again as its representative, so that the riches of God's fatherly heart might through Him descend upon it in forgiveness and renewal."[1] The theological terms in common use have too frequently come to be filled with an utterly false connotation. The sacrifice offered by Christ is the product of God's love—who is eternally one with the Son — not its creator. We pray more truly when we ask God to pardon us "in Christ," than when we say, "for Christ's sake," which phrase may recall the semi-pagan conceptions of mediævalism. Jesus

[1] Forrest, p. 224.

is indeed the one Mediator between God and man, but this description becomes luminous only as we remember that God's work of redemption was wrought out *in humanity*, through it as the fitting *medium*, by One who shared the nature of those whom God would lift up into His salvation. In Christ the eternal love comes under the moral law of suffering, through which forgiveness may work its perfect work.

The Christian Eucharist is no propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead ; it is rather an act of praise and thanksgiving for reconciliation already effected. It is the Incarnation which supplies the basis for the atonement. If on the cross of Christ the mind of God Himself be not revealed, what guarantee have we that this is the divine appeal for our return ? We might revere Jesus as a saint and martyr, but how worship Him as Saviour ? The true symbol of the atonement is not to be found in the bloody sacrifice of the Old Testament which corresponded to an imperfect, undeveloped moral and religious state, but rather in Christ's parable of the Prodigal Son. In that most beautiful of human stories, man's sin is represented as a departure from the presence of the Father, and his reconciliation, as his "coming to himself"—his higher and truer self, the self which God in-

tended to be exhibited in filial relationship on the one side, and the ready acceptance of this change, this moral conversion, on the other.

Most truly, most beneficially shall we think of the atonement wrought by Christ, as our conceptions are transferred from the transactional or substitutional, to the ethical plane. The divine forgiveness, as Canon Moberly pointed out, is not a capricious, amiable, non-moral act, but in the highest sense righteous, because its presupposition is forgiveableness on the part of man. The only full atonement, says Beyschlag, in the sight of God, is a person and a deed, which like Christ in His self-sacrifice contains the power of breaking sin in man, and which really exercises this power in the believer. In this connection, as in others, the Bible has undoubtedly lost a certain amount of authority, as a repository of proof-texts. As has been well said, what it has lost in word value, it has gained in thought value. There may be less of the words of Scripture on our lips to-day, but the loss is of little consequence if there be, as there is, more of its thought in our minds :—

> " For words, like nature, half reveal
> And half conceal the soul within."

It should be our individual endeavour to discover the true significance of the life and work

of Christ. This far exceeds in importance the presentation of a number of texts in proof of a doctrine. It cannot be doubted that there exists widespread dissatisfaction with the formularies and dogmas that have served previous generations. Men's ideas have to a great extent changed, and no corresponding change has taken place in the modes of expression, so that a feeling of unreality and mere conventionalism has arisen in regard to the ideas thereby denoted. The imminent danger is, that along with the conventional expressions, there may be rejected also underlying elements of eternal truth, to which, as originally used, they bore fit witness. "Plans of salvation" and "schemes of redemption" with their theories of imputed sin and imputed righteousness, for us lack moral breadth and a sense of reality, not to say veracity. To have got rid of all such outworn, mechanical conceptions, is indeed an advantage, but serious also must be the loss, if we lose hold of the cross on account of the clouds of mystery that have gathered about it. As we seek to return to Christ, we escape from the trammels of an artificial system, and come nearer to the conception of redemption as a vital process, in which the soul is brought into personal contact with its Saviour and reconciled to the eternal love that dwells in the heart of the Father.

IX

THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

" Who keeps one end in view,
Makes all things serve."

BROWNING.

As the " return to Christ " does not mean the vain endeavour to repeat the mental and spiritual conditions of Palestine two thousand years ago, so neither is that charge just which characterises the history of Christian society, as the history of a great evasion. It seems impossible, says Dean Church, to conceive three things more opposite at first sight to the Sermon on the Mount than War, Law and Trade ; yet Christian society has long since made up its mind about them, and we all accept them as among the necessities or occupations of human society. How are we to justify ourselves ? Can we alone maintain the legitimacy of these varied spheres of human thought and action, by reasoning which has no connection with or is even opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ ? Is it our confession that modern Christendom is frankly non-Christian in these respects, or do we indeed believe that the Gospel rightly understood claims them for its own ? The Christian Church suffers much from want of explicitness here. In how many do we not see combined an other-worldliness in theory, with a thorough-going

worldliness in practice, such as aroused the contempt of Matthew Arnold! A very large section of the Church, if its action were the logical outcome of its doctrine, should follow the example of Tolstoi, or of The Poor Men of Lyons; but refraining from such extremes, they condemn themselves to an existence wherein their secular avocations are cut off from any inspiration of religious principle. This conscious and contented living beneath our ideal is absolutely fatal to character and largely accounts for the ineffectiveness of the Church to-day, for as Emerson says, we only believe as deep as we live.

Christianity was the introduction of a new principle of living into human society, "according to Christ Jesus." It has ever re-echoed in its best teaching the sentiment which won the plaudits of the Roman theatre: "*Nihil humanum a me alienum puto.*" Of set purpose it has naturalised and adopted art, science, literature. Unlike a debased Puritanism, it does not regard life's activities as unavoidable episodes in a huge Vanity Fair, from which the speedier the escape the better. It recognises society as God's ordinance, through the discipline of which man shall grow to a maturity unattainable by mere individualism; it sees His will in the facts of the world, His providence

in the tendencies and conditions amid which we have our existence. In this world so ordered God meant us to live. And for this world—unless there is nothing more to be done than to wait for its ending—what we call society, the rule of law, the employments of business, the cultivation of our infinite resources, the embodiment of public force and power, the increase of wealth, the continued improvements of social arrangements—all this is indispensable. If the necessities of our condition here, illuminated as they are to us by long experience, be no evidence of God's purposes, we are indeed in darkness, with scant clue of guidance towards discernment of the divine will; finding only perplexity and retardment in the multiplied activities which encompass us, and claim full measure of our devotion.

Religion has been treated—it was a luminous remark of Phillips Brooks—as if it were the special exercise of a special power, not as if it were the possible loftiness of everything that a man could think or be, or do. The result has been that certain men, and certain parts of men, have stood forth as distinctively religious, and that the possible religiousness of all life has been but very imperfectly felt and acknowledged. This has made religion weak. Man's strongest

powers, his intensest passions, have been involved in the working out of his career, and in the development of his relations with his fellowmen. What has been left over for religion has too frequently been the weakest part of him, his sentiments and his fears: and so religion very often has come to seem a thing of mystic mood and frightened superstitions.

The austere maxims of privation and separation from secular things of the earliest Christian days were a temporary necessity, "the accompaniments of a transformation whose inward greatness demanded for the time a total break with the established framework of society."[1] Gradually as time went on, experience brought with it the recognition of the profounder and more Catholic meaning of Christian truth. The horizon widened, and illuminated by God's spirit, was seen to bound a redeemed world, wherein men were, from day to day, to work out their own salvation, calling nothing common nor unclean, for,

> "This world's no blot for us,
> Nor blank; it means intensely and means good."

It is quite true that our whole modern cast of life is different from that of the world which heard the Sermon on the Mount. Our political

[1] Forrest, p. 359.

enthusiasms, our pursuit of literature or scientific research, our cultivation of artistic excellence, seem to have but little correspondence with the strenuous moral tone of the New Testament, with its spiritual withdrawal and intensity. Confidence in our own mind that these are for us the order of Divine Providence, is the necessary condition of a whole-hearted, enthusiastic devotion to them, wherein religion shall be no *arrière-pensée*, but stimulating atmosphere and vital inspiration. The historical sense must be exercised in our reading of the New Testament, if we would be preserved from the mistakes of those who turn to its pages for detailed guidance in intellectual, social and political matters, forgetting that what are called "questions of the day" could neither have been formulated nor understood in the Judæa of the first century. What makes New Testament Christianity, in some sense, our "rule of life" is that it exemplifies for us the working of Christ's spirit in its purest form, and at its greatest intensity, although under conditions which have largely ceased to obtain. It is plainly His spirit which we have to imitate; His method of meeting the duties and problems of life, which we must gather for ourselves from its manifestation in the pages of the Gospel.

Much of the apostolic language is coloured by the conviction that their world was soon to pass away; that the time was short; that the Lord was at hand. Subsequent history—which is God's revelation of His purposes—has shown that in this they were mistaken; that their Master's return, of which He Himself spoke, lay rather in the uplifting and purifying of the standards of life by the ever-present spirit of Jesus. And as for Christ Himself, let us not forget the lesson of the silent years, and fix attention solely upon the period of His public ministry. Till the Spirit called Him to a definite mission, He was known to His fellow-countrymen not as the religious reformer, but simply "the Carpenter." The activities of the last three years of His earthly life, of set purpose from the necessary requirements of His mission, entirely converged on what was directly spiritual. His abstinence from many kinds of intellectual and practical activity is no more to be regarded as a condemnation of them, than His restriction of His career to one land and one people is a disparagement of other countries and nations that He never knew.

When, as with a modern writer, we are invited to choose between Christian, Greek or Goth, and when to the latter the palm is adjudged, as the

most virile type of character, there must be something sadly astray in our discipleship of the perfect Man. The type of manhood we are assured which commands respect in Christendom, or lives effectually as a goal of modern endeavour and a potent factor of progress, is neither the saint with his mystical other-worldliness, nor the "phronimos" with his cold statuesque perfection and his reasonableness, but the "Gothic" or military type, the man of action with his ideal of honour and of chivalry. "The others still linger on men's lips, this alone rules in their hearts."

Surely we have misunderstood Christ if we have found in the "other-worldliness" of asceticism or mysticism, the highest Christian type, so sadly lacking in appeal and sanity to all robust and vigorous character. Is the thoughtful modern man who takes Christ as his pattern, really so far hindered and hampered in the laudable ambition to carve a career for himself amongst his fellow-men? Is his measure of success actually due to natural qualities, with which the principles of Christ are often at variance? Can the spirit of self-sacrifice and of competition exist together? Is not Christianity a law of restraint rather than a law of liberty? If indeed Christ be the ideal and pattern

of humanity, what means that half-puzzled, half-resentful note so often heard, "This may be Christian, but it is not manly"? What answer shall we give to questionings such as these coming to us from the midst of modern life? We shall say this, that Christianity essentially means self-development. It is not so much the person of feeble interests, lack of desire, narrow activities and absence of strong will, who represents man as God would have him be, but rather the man wealthy in interests and with large and varied powers, whose desires are capable of passion and whose will is self-directed, tenacious, strong. A full development of personality is the evolving of the divine image. So Christ bids all with confidence "Follow me," for His Incarnation is the proof that human nature belongs,as its rightful element, to the divine. It can come to its best only by the entrance and possession of it by divinity. Christ is both authentication and revelation. He appeals to me to *recognise* Him by the human instinct that is in me already, and then it is His work to enlarge, enlighten and refine this instinct by which He has first been recognised. This assuredly is the true order, rather than the demand, so unreasonably made, that I shall first *judge* Him by the standard of

my confessedly imperfect manhood, before which judgment He must necessarily fail.

As we desire to present Christianity as the absolute religion, and the Christian life the ideal life here and now, for the perfect development of our humanity in all its dimensions, so shall we strive to raise every faculty within us to its highest; for then every one of them is an avenue of approach to God, to whom our true attitude is not so much self-surrender—the ideal of mysticism,—as self-fulfilment, the ideal of our larger apprehension of Christianity.

The "superman" of modern thought is largely built up of, and lives by certain too neglected elements of the Christian ideal of perfect manhood. In this often distorted conception, we do well to recognise the confused gropings after a loftier type. It has much with which we can sympathise; the scorn of contented mediocrity; the feeling that a man should be himself, and not the creature of servile imitation and conformity; the aspiration after the "strong man" of Carlyle, the hero, whose production is the goal of modern endeavour.

"Desire much," says the Stoic, "and you reach unhappiness: therefore cease from desire." "Desire much," says the Christian, "for all things are yours. Covet earnestly the best

gifts and then you will find satisfaction and peace in the absolute good, in God alone." So self-development followed completely; the development of our truest, most real selves, is not "naturalism," but becomes self-dedication, and leads to that co-operation with God which is the highest form of relationship with Him.

> "Our wills are ours, we know not how,
> Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

The Ascetic and the Puritan were entirely right in their renouncing of the "world," in so far as worldliness meant the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. They were wrong in their endeavour to establish the negations of abstention as a test to separate the world from the elect. As a matter of fact the result always has been worse for the elect than for those condemned.

The error of the monastic and Puritan ideals alike, is that they regard that alone as having a religious value which has an immediate religious reference. Rather do the activities and relations of human society offer a content, a subject-matter, for the self-realisation of the spiritual life, which finds in them organs for its fuller expression. The revelation of God in Christ is not meant to supplant His prior revelations of Himself in man and in nature. "The materials with which it deals

are already given in the primary instincts of humanity, which have created the family and the state; which have bound men in innumerable bonds of social intercourse; which have impelled them to intellectual and artistic achievement. In proportion as it disparages any of the fundamental affections and aspirations of man's nature, it impairs its own greatness, and abdicates its supreme place as the one unifying and consecrating principle, which at once assigns to each its proper function and inspires it with fresh vigour."[1]

There are earnest Christian men who acknowledge and deplore as a grievous fault in themselves the fact that their relation to Christ is not always consciously present to them. In self-defence they point to the absorbing character of some particular sphere of work, which practically excludes the thought of everything else. Is this pathetic attempt at justification really necessary? Loyalty to Christ does not depend upon our continual consciousness of His nearness, but upon the doing of His will as revealed by the demands of our appointed place, and by our own fitness to meet them. Unconscious actions, writes Mr R. H. Hutton, are often the sustaining power of faith. Common minds are not equal to a constant strain upon their conscious relation

[1] Forrest, p. 288.

to God. Many can do their duty, who cannot do it out of a life of faith, *i.e.*, out of conscious and living dependence. What we are to strive to exclude is conscious trust in ourselves; those attitudes of our moral nature which rise into consciousness, must be attitudes of trust in One higher and purer than ourselves.

> "We cannot kindle when we will
> The fire which in the heart resides:
> The spirit bloweth and is still,
> In mystery our soul abides.
> But tasks in hours of insight willed,
> Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled."

So again, it is untrue to say that those only who in the studio or laboratory are *consciously* seeking the good of society or humanity, are worthy artists or truth-seekers. As Bishop d'Arcy points out in his "Short Study of Ethics," while each interest has its due place in the individual's life, and should be gratified according to his circumstances, all must be subject to the one supreme ethical principle, self-realisation in a common good. The proximate, the immediate end is in every case, the good in itself, and should be sought for its own sake; "Art for Art's sake," and so far the artist is not thinking of the good of humanity.

But while this is so, the sub-conscious recognition of an absolutely valuable end, a social

order in which every person shall find realisation —" the common good," must stimulate effort, elicit hope, and ennoble life. Thus it is possible for ordinary men to look beyond the present, in a way which is not unworthy of being regarded as, a doing all things " to the glory of God." The belief in a divine education, open to each man and to all men, takes up into itself all that is true in the end proposed by culture, supplements and perfects it. It is right indeed that we should have an aim of our own determined by our individuality and our environment; but this may and does readily degenerate into exclusive narrowness, unless it has for a background the great thought, that there is a kingdom of God within us, around us and above us.

When an attempt is made, as in these pages, to set forth the marvellous power of adaptability and assimilation inherent in the Christian faith, are we guilty to the charge of special-pleading, of manipulating facts to our own ends, and reading into them possibilities of meaning to which they are entirely foreign? Have our modern interpretations any real and vital connection with the essential spirit of Christianity, or are they so many *addenda,* to make the old faith acceptable to modern thought? Our answer will very largely depend upon what our conception of

essential Christianity is. If we think of it as a new religion of detailed practice to be followed, and precept to be literally obeyed; if in this sense we are to return to Christ and so alone preserve the faith, "once for all committed to the Saints," then indeed the accusation is true: Christianity is the history of a great evasion; let us also add of a great impossibility. But it is not so. In direct opposition to such a conception, stands the whole record of the method of Jesus. The Christianity of Christ is a religion not of the letter, but of the spirit. Christ aimed to rule the world through the inspiration of His spirit, not through specific direction. We are not to refer to Him as the directive judge of an act, for this He refused to be. "Man, who made me a judge or decider over you?" But we shall look unto Jesus as the Author of our faith, our spiritual motive-power, and shall endeavour to work this spirit of His into every department of life, that He may be also its Finisher. For a little space the veil was withdrawn and God was manifested in a human personality. A fresh stage of history was entered upon, transfigured by the revelation of God, and of the possibilities of man; of his essential likeness, belonging to God. What men had dimly felt before, was now known to be true. God was not only *for* man, and *with* man, but also

in man. "You live in a redeemed world," are the great words of Christ. "Open your lives to the divine influences around and within you. My life has shown you what men ought to be and can be. Follow Me. Ponder over my way of living, and apply it in all the widely differing circumstances of an ever-changing human society. I offer you no new Law of Commandments to be blindly followed, but the principles of a new life to be reasonably lived. This is your discipline, by this ye will prove yourselves my disciples and work out, as freemen not servile imitators, your own salvation." That the Church did not at once comprehend the fulness of Christianity, need not be denied, nor ought this to occasion surprise. What marvel if she found herself puzzled, as the faith passed from its ancient Eastern home into Europe and was confronted with the philosophy and science and art of Western civilisation! Yet she has learned, though indeed slowly, to appropriate the message of her Master, and for this she could have had no capacity, had not the message itself been really larger than was once dreamed of. "The adequacy of the Christian faith to meet the demands of the human spirit was there from the first; it was the Church's interpretation that failed." Only slowly has it come to realise, that much of

what it regarded as an essential part of the Gospel was but the temporary Semitic form in which it clothed itself, and from which it must be disengaged to fulfil its purpose as the message of the Son of Man ; and that it could equally assume other forms of thought and life, and mould them by its renewing power.

We have taken it for granted so far that Jesus was indeed the ideal man ; that in the particular circumstances of all His words and actions, there was no falling short of the pattern of perfection. This has been, this is the belief of Christendom. In Him, has been her bold and confident appeal to the judgment-bar of human conscience, " Behold the Man." The interesting writer of " The Diary of a Church-goer," has, though with the utmost reverence and confessed hesitation, ventured to utter his *caveat* here. Let us respect such honest statement of personal doubt, and examine the grounds upon which it is founded. It is better far that such thoughts should be expressed, and met in the open, than brooded over in silence by the disturbed mind, with fatal disintegrating result upon individual faith. The assumption is that our antecedent belief in Christ the Perfect One, has quite unconsciously dominated our judgment of the acts and words of Jesus ; that the conclusions at which we might

otherwise arrive, are closed before us in advance. If questionings become irrepressible, some new rendering of the primary meaning of the narrative is apt to be discovered as a solution of them. It is indeed true that the majority of us accept the faith of Christendom as to the moral perfection of Jesus, without having previously examined for ourselves every detail of His life. This principle, let us remember, holds in other regions equally as in that of religion. "One is always somebody's child." This would indeed be a strange, unprogressive, disconnected world for us, if there existed no inherited premises for the individual to begin with. But here as elsewhere the conclusion which we accept from others, was once attained to as an induction reached from many converging details. The result impressed upon the first Christians by the whole life of Jesus—to His disciples a daily repeated series of words and actions—was that He differed from all other men in being sinless, morally perfect. The confession of Peter, "We believe and know that Thou art the Holy One of God" may be taken to be a faithful reflection of the feeling which arose in the minds of the disciples, from the time when they began to be closely associated with Jesus, and steadily grew in strength and vividness as their opportunities of observation increased.

The reasoning of those who dispute the perfect holiness of Jesus by challenging His conduct in particular instances, however genuine it be, ex-expressing a sincere conviction, nevertheless largely rests upon an abstract treatment of certain elements in the case and a misappreciation of the spiritual issues involved. Any slight difficulty that remains, as Godet points out, springs from our ignorance, in part, of the precise circumstances which determined Jesus' action. But the real and final answer is that, " He stood self-vindicated; that the memory of these incidents brought Him no tremor of regret in later hours. This cannot be explained by any lower ideals or lack of moral self-knowledge on His part; and if He followed unperturbed a course which at all perplexes us, it was because His clearer vision perceived facts which lie beyond our range." [1]

Amongst the reported words of Jesus there is one striking instance which both affords a superficial reasonableness to the assertion that Jesus did not Himself claim to be sinless, and at the same time enables us to perceive how their real meaning is not to be found in their isolation, but in connection with His method and His purpose. Jesus, in reply to the young man who asked how to attain eternal life, refuses to be called " good."

[1] Forrest, p. 32.

" There is none good but One, that is God " (St Luke xviii. 19). Alike in this to the great Athenian teacher, Jesus will have men examine the words which they use. What He manifestly rejects here is the title of mere conventional courtesy, having no moral depth nor inwardness. He cannot mean to deny the right of the young man to call Him good, on the ground that this is the attribute of God alone, whereas He has not been recognised by His questioner as divine. Such recognition of His divinity He would not have expected from a stranger, since even the Apostles did not attain to it during His earthly life.

The method of Jesus ever was to stir the sluggish fountain of thought, to awaken self-examination, to win men to Himself by the appeal not to authority but to reasonableness.

This particular case which we have been examining affords also a concrete illustration of the endeavour approved throughout these pages so to use criticism as to obtain a clearer insight into the mind of Jesus. In St Matthew's account of this incident, as it is now accepted, the words of Jesus are, " Why askest thou me concerning that which is good ? " Here we have apparently a modification, introduced by this Evangelist, arising from the fear of inferences hostile to the

purity of Jesus, which might be drawn from the record given by St Mark and St Luke. In such cases the New Testament critic has good grounds for accepting as genuine the more difficult reading in preference to the easier. It is quite true that in the formation of his judgment, subjective considerations often have considerable weight, but as both readings cannot be correct, his conclusion must be formed upon the total external and internal evidence available. Good criticism may indeed be spun, like the spider's web, out of wholly subjective material, but it must have anchorage in objective fact.

It may at once be granted that criticism of Jesus' character as not of ideal perfection, springs in our time, not from any desire to reduce Him to a lower level, but rather from higher perceptions of what an ideal character should be, than those which once satisfied mankind. Is it too much to say that this loftier moral elevation has itself been reached by the influence of the character of Jesus? To-day it is really the Spiritual Christ who affords the standard by which we test the historical Jesus of the Gospels. So tried He rings true, and the imputation of moral defect or weakness is found to have no firmer basis than an imperfect apprehension of the facts.

Finally, it has been objected, that in the pages of the Gospels themselves Jesus is represented as subject to waves of depression, as the man confident of divine approval is not. To deny such an assertion, with the story of Gethsemane outspread before us, we have neither the power nor the will. There we learn indeed how Jesus exhibits the characteristics not of the ideal man in heaven, but here on earth, where it is sometimes night. Subject to earthly limitations and vicissitudes, He ever victoriously rises above them. "The demand for such an ideal not thus subject, is a self-defeating demand. The ideal which it contemplates would be no ideal at all, simply because unearthly, and so inimitable."

It is by our return to the Jesus portrayed in the pages of the Gospel that we are enabled to correct exaggerations and one-sided conceptions of the perfect character there revealed. As we scan the pages of Christian history we find how again and again the tendency has been to elevate some one aspect of His character out of due proportion, and so far to mar the complete symmetry of the whole. Our temptation is to raise that to an universal standard which to ourselves makes strongest appeal. The Ascetic, the Mystic, the Sentimentalist, the Pragmatist

each claims Christ as peculiarly his own: and invests Him consequently with something of his own partialness, his own limitations. All such

> "Are but broken lights of Thee,
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

Jesus the Christ is greater than our greatest thoughts of Him. In His perfect humanity He has revealed God to us, for He has translated the divine who dwells in the Light Unapproachable out of the terms of the Absolute which for us "passeth man's understanding" into terms of human life. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us—full of grace and truth."

The Christian Church exists as to her sacraments, ministry, worship, doctrine for the production and cultivation of the Christian character. The Christian character is the exemplification of the spirit of Christ. Apart from any possibly controverted questions as to the spiritual efficacy of the two great Christian sacraments, how are we to be imbued with, to be partakers of this spirit of Christ? We would simply answer:—By the following of Jesus in His way. No one with the Gospel open before Him, can plead ignorance of the method of life, "according to Christ Jesus." We act unwisely: we perplex ourselves with matters beyond our present com-

prehension, if we postpone this Christian life, till we understand *how* His spirit can become ours: after what fashion the divine can help the human. But this at least seems clear, it can be in no mechanical and quantitative way. The grace of God is no deposit lodged within the individual to be drawn upon to meet the contingency of spiritual necessities. We use these words most luminously when by them we express the indwelling of the divine in the human, the human raised to its highest power. He who thinks as Jesus thought, loves as Jesus loved, wills as Jesus willed, by these tokens indubitably proves himself son of God, having the life of God, animated by the spirit of God; and into the metaphysical region beyond this, it is vain for him to seek to enter, for spirit, divine or human, is to us known not in itself, but only in and through its effects. Such is the Christian character ever beckoning mankind on and upward towards its ideal. "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." Man lives best as He lives by the divine life, not his own; by the divine life made his own through the close binding of the two together by faith and love.

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XXIX.–XXX. *Moses' Third Discourse. Israel formally called upon to enter into the Deuteronomic Covenant.*

The Deuteronomic Code ends with c. 28. C. 29–30 is of the nature of a supplement, insisting afresh upon the fundamental principle of the Code, viz. devotion to Jehovah, and calling upon Israel to yield loyal allegiance to it. The discourse falls naturally into three parts. In the first, Moses, after referring to what Jehovah has done for Israel ($29^{1-8\,(2-9)}$), reminds them that the purpose for which they are now assembled together is that they may enter solemnly into covenant with Him, and warns them afresh of the disastrous consequences, including national ruin and exile, which a lapse into idolatry will inevitably entail ($29^{9-28\,(10-29)}$); in the second, imagining the threatened exile to have taken place, he promises that even then, if Israel sincerely repents, Jehovah will again receive it into His favour, and restore it to the land of promise (30^{1-10}); in the third, he sums up, in brief but forcible words, the two alternatives placed before Israel, life and happiness on the one side, death and misfortune on the other, and adjures the nation to choose wisely between them (30^{11-20}).

In these chapters, the connection is sometimes imperfect, esp. between 30^{1-10} and 30^{11-20} (see on 30^{11}); several words and phrases occur, not otherwise found in Dt. (Dillm. notes השכיל $29^{8\,(9)}$, אלה *oath*, *imprecation*, $29^{11.\,13.\,18.\,19.\,20\,(12.\,14.\,19.\,20.\,21)}$ 30^{7}, *idol-blocks* and *detestations* $29^{16\,(17)}$, פן יש $29^{17\,(18)}$, שרירות *stubbornness* $29^{18\,(19)}$, עשן אף and סלח $29^{19\,(20)}$, לרעה *unto evil* $29^{20\,(21)}$, תחלואים *sicknesses* $29^{21\,(22)}$, *forsake the covenant* $29^{24\,(25)}$, נחש *pluck up* $29^{27\,(28)}$, הדיח *drive away* $30^{1.\,4}$; and the phrases $29^{5\,(6)b.\,17\,(18)b.\,18\,(19)b}$); and the points of contact with Jeremiah are more numerous than usual. A question thus arises, whether the text is throughout in its original order, and whether it is entirely by the same hand as the body of Dt.: see the Introduction, § 4.

XXIX. 1–8 (2–9). Moses reminds the Israelites of all that Jehovah has wrought for them, from the time of their deliverance from Egypt, founding upon it a renewed exhortation to obey the words of the covenant.—The paragraph is a recapitulation of the substance of earlier parts of Dt., stated largely in the same phraseology.—1 (2). *And Moses called unto all Israel* (1^{1}), *and said unto them*] exactly as 5^{1}.—*Ye* (emph.) *have*

This laying hold of her hand and the raised voice (ἐφώνησεν) are consonant with waking one out of sleep, and the two may be regarded as the means of the miracle. Comp. and contrast throughout Acts ix. 36–42.

Ἡ παῖς, ἔγειρε. "Arise, get up," not "awake." Mt. omits the command; Mk. gives the exact words, *Talitha cumi*. For the nom. with the art. as voc. see on x. 21, xviii. 11, 13. For ἐφώνησεν comp. ver. 8, xvi. 24.

55. ἐπέστρεψεν τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτῆς. There can be no doubt that the Evangelist uses the phrase of the spirit returning to a dead body, which is the accurate use of the phrase. Only the beloved physician makes this statement. In LXX it is twice used of a living man's strength reviving; of the fainting Samson (Judg. xv. 19), and of the starving Egyptian (1 Sam. xxx. 12). Note that Lk. has his favourite παραχρῆμα, where Mk. has his favourite εὐθύς; and comp. ver. 44, v. 25, xviii. 43, xxii. 60.

διέταξεν αὐτῇ δοθῆναι φαγεῖν. This care of Jesus in commanding food after the child's long exhaustion would be of special interest to Lk. In their joy and excitement the parents might have forgotten it. The charge is somewhat parallel to ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ (vii. 15) of the widow's son at Nain. In each case He intimates that nature is to resume its usual course: the old ties and the old responsibilities are to begin again.

56. παρήγγειλεν αὐτοῖς μηδενὶ εἰπεῖν τὸ γεγονός. The command has been rejected as an unintelligible addition to the narrative. No such command was given at Nain or at Bethany. The object of it cannot have been to keep the miracle a secret. Many were outside expecting the funeral, and they would have to be told why no funeral was to take place. It can hardly have been Christ's intention in this way to prevent the multitude from making a bad use of the miracle. This command to the parents would not have attained such an object. It was given more probably for the parents' sake, to keep them from letting the effect of this great blessing evaporate in vainglorious gossip. To thank God for it at home would be far more profitable than talking about it abroad.

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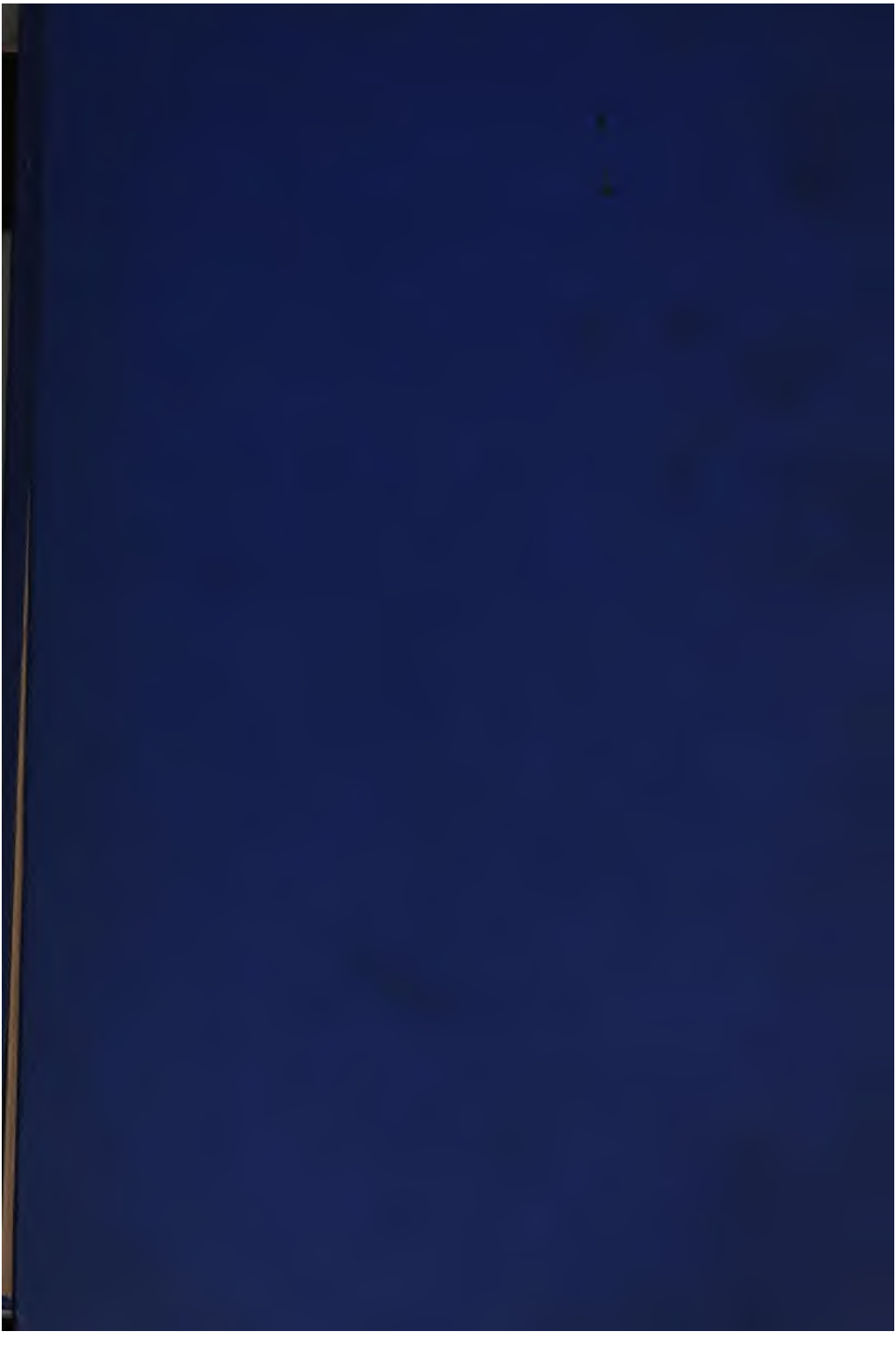
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